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We recommend creating a “digital organization chart” of the US government, publicly available and online, that maps the Executive Office of the President, Cabinet Departments, and independent federal agencies. Such a map would extend down through every sub-organization to each position, identifying office holders, position titles, locations, and links to other critical information and affiliations.

Memo

TO: Obama-Biden Transition Team
FROM: Jeffrey Stamps and Jessica Lipnack (contact info at end)
SUBJECT: Digital Organization Chart for US Government

Background: We are management consultants with expertise in networks, collaboration, and trust. Co-authors of six books, including *Networking*, *The Age of the Network*, and *Virtual Teams*, we’ve been online since 1979 and on the web at www.netage.com since 1995. We offer this memo as our best thinking on how to create even greater transparency as the new administration takes shape.

What We Recommend: Create a publicly available, online “digital organization chart.” The chart maps every position in the government, beginning with the President and extending all the way down from the Executive Office and Cabinet Departments to the lowest positions. In effect, every office and its current occupant become visible online, indicating how they connect to



all the rest. As a public service, we have started a first draft of the Executive Branch, mapping top down: [Run dynamic map of the US Gov.](#)

Why This Is Important: As a practical matter, transparency requires revealing both specific detail and overall context. The US government is so vast that people who’ve worked in it for decades still don’t understand how it works. We believe that “Google for Government” (e.g., www.USAspending.gov) with its searchable databases of funding and policy-making documents are critical first steps but they’re not enough. For real transparency in the highly-connected,

complex 21st-century, we need maps—clear interconnected “roadmaps” to our very complicated government. Searches pinpoint detail but, without connections among specific bits of information, the context remains invisible or at least heavily shrouded. We propose combining dynamic maps of the *entire* government within an interconnected, comprehensive picture of the whole. Such a “digital org chart” can identify who’s in which position, what that position is responsible for, how much money is in its budget, and where that money goes—along with how all the pieces fit together. (NB: Classified information and organizations, for security reasons, of course, cannot appear on the web and need to be protected.)

Why does mapping our government matter? Mapping matters because the complexity that we can't see is, for example, at the heart of the economic catastrophe and our organizational attempts to fix it. And complexity is compounding exponentially. We need to see clearly what we're doing.

With a visible, shareable picture of our common organizational whole, we can rebuild trust, hold one another accountable, and have the ability to bring more minds to bear in service of finding solutions.

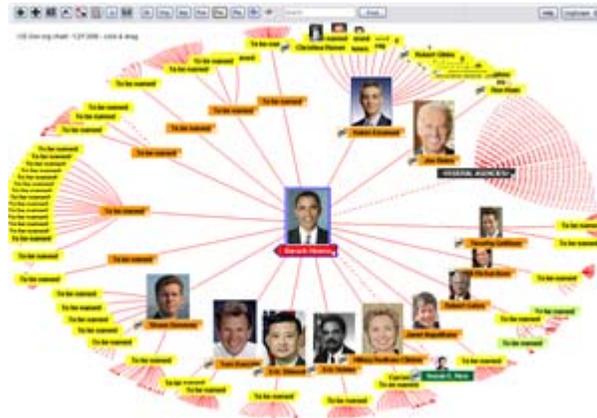
How We Started This: Over the past five years (and originally with the help of a long-term client, Royal Dutch Shell), we developed [OrgScope](#), software that maps networks, including formal ones like organizational hierarchies. Think of it as organizational topography that allows you to visualize and navigate as you can with Google Earth. Onto that base, you can add layers of detail and connections. Our first such maps were of Shell’s European Exploration and Production unit, which we wrote about in a general way in “[The Virtual, Networked Organization: How One Company Became Transparent](#),” a chapter in a longer book on virtual teams. Subsequently, we’ve used OrgScope to sketch a [network map of the Boston Healthcare](#) “topography,” the Army’s [Combined Arms Center Knowledge](#) unit at Fort Leavenworth, and a number of other private organizations.

TARP in OrgScope: Shortly after the Troubled Assets Rescue Program was put in place, we began to track, as a public service, the Office of Financial Stability, mapping both its internal organization and its disbursements. For example, as consulting contracts are let, we attach them to the OFS structure; as transactions are made, we enter the names of recipients and the network of grows.

To map TARP, and then later rescue efforts, we used publicly available sources such as the org chart of the Treasury Department. To that, we linked its press releases, contracts to awardees as published on its site, and media reports. As the crisis continued and rescue programs proliferated (we’re up to \$3 trillion in spending and \$8.5 trillion in commitments), we created additional links. We’ve been publishing all of this to our website section on “[2008 Economic Crisis](#)” and blogging about it [here](#). This is an example of a network “layer” on top of the hierarchical “topography.” Click on this link to run the map that includes the “[Economic Rescue Network](#).”

How We Can Map the Obama

Administration: Since November 4, we've been plugging in the new Administration's staff appointees and cabinet nominees, along with the top-level org charts of those departments. Here's a snapshot of the [US Gov map](#), current through the nomination of [Shaun Donovan to HUD](#).



It's not that difficult to build on our initial attempts and create an open network map of government. At the top, departmental org charts, which now are all in disconnected pieces within agencies, detail a few thousand positions. With comparatively few relevant lines, it's easy to connect them. Then just add two million more positions.

Although it sounds like a monumental job to construct this “digital org chart of the US government,” our experience working with the commercial and military sectors indicates that most of the information needed is just sitting there in federal financial systems. The Office of Management and Budget, which Peter Orszag is slated to head, has the budgets and headcount for each agency and sub-agency, likely with detail down to the level of every job. Such information also presumably lies in the many human resource and information technology systems that run the government payroll and cut the checks. Hooking the whole thing together is mostly a one-time expense of time and IT resources. Similarly, the process that refreshes the basis data is relatively straightforward.

Benefits: For new appointments, a top-down view of their entire departments would provide immediate and invaluable insight into the organizations. Responsible change begins with an accurate view of the “as-is” organization of government.

We can complement a top-down mapping with a bottoms-up approach by following the money we already spend. Start with the OMB spending database to reverse-engineer the underlying organizational network and its budgetary impact along the lines of the economic rescue network idea described above. Each government award/grant/deal has been generated by some front-line team with a supervisor who reports to someone who reports to someone in a chain up to the Secretary of Something, an agency like HHS, Homeland Security, or Defense. Track the money up the reporting chains of jobs and you map much of the federal bureaucracy—and spending—from the bottom up. The result is a single, navigable network of government agencies with links to where our precious annual trillions are spent.

By mapping the government network top-down and bottom-up, everyone can see the same thing. What we can see we can understand, use, and change in an open, adaptive fashion.

We just need to connect the dots and much becomes clear. When our public organizations are open and visible, they provide the basis for rebuilding trust—priority one for enabling all the hard stuff to come. People in government are more likely to act responsibly when the results of their work are visible to all, not just to their supervisors.

Finally, with a shared view of the whole, we naturally engage many more minds. Truly, in the face of such monumental complexity as this moment presents, the whole is smarter than any of us individually.

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