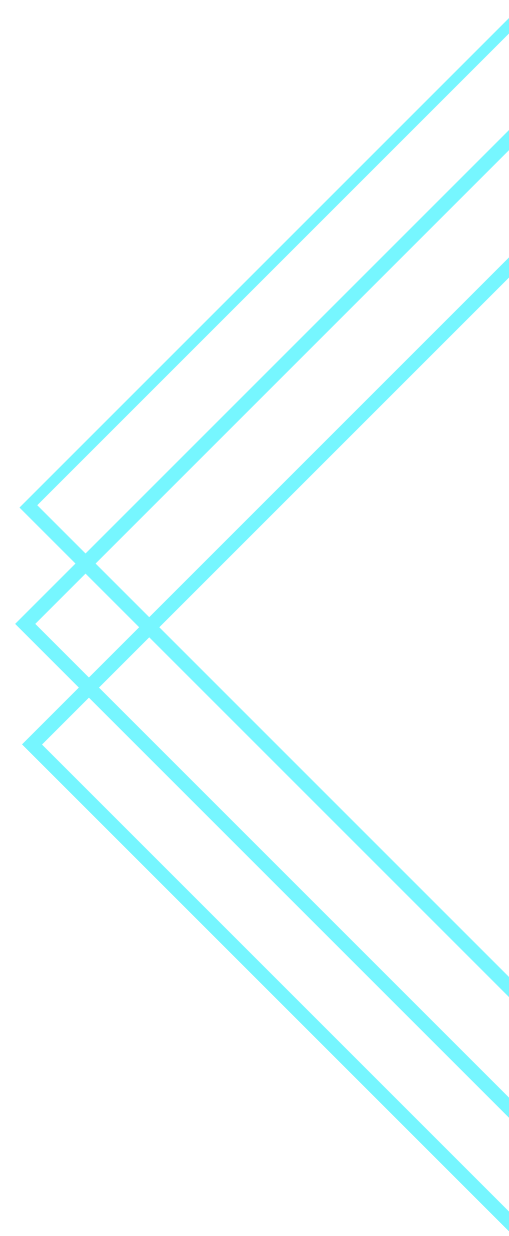
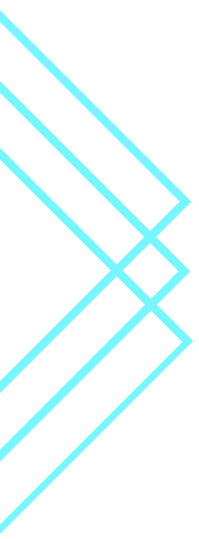


GX Talks Leadership Dialogues

Regenerating public services for an evolving world:
Leadership lessons and experiences from
changemakers

**September 1st
Event Summary**



Key Insights into the Future of Digital Public Services

The StateUp-GX Talks Leadership Dialogue on September 1st brought together perspectives from the UK, UAE, and Israel for a high-level expert panel on the future of digital government innovation and service delivery. Moderated by StateUp Founder Dr. Tanya Filer, the discussion featured Shai-Lee Spiegelman, Israel's Director General of the Ministry of Science and Technology; Theo Blackwell MBE, London's first Chief Digital Officer; and His Excellency Mohamed Bin Taliah, Chief of Government Services of the United Arab Emirates Government.

The past year and a half have been transformative for governments everywhere. Technology has both kept many public servants going, becoming essential to their everyday functions– but even more so, it has become mission-critical to serving citizens. Drawing from this starting point, our conversation both reflected on this experience and looked to the future, to consider what the next wave of digital public services will look like and offer, and what role there is for citizens, innovation ecosystems, and startups, to play in that process.

Speakers:

- HE Mohamed Bin Taliah, Minister for Government Services, Government of the UAE
- Shai-Lee Spigelman, Director General, Ministry of Science and Technology, Israel
- Theo Blackwell MBE, Chief Digital Officer, London

Moderator:

- Dr. Tanya Filer, Founder & CEO, StateUp

Six ideas from the high-level panel

1. Understand the problem first

Digital government leaders should be selective and deliberate in the technology they adopt. Blackwell described this as “fixing the plumbing”, ensuring strong data foundations and basic technological needs are met rather than focusing on emerging technologies for their own sake. As Bin Taliah described, “we don't want technology to lead us, we want to lead technology. Spigelman agreed that governments must “first find the use case, then find the tech.” The use case for an emerging technology, like blockchain for example, may not be immediate in a public service context, but specific, contextually sensitive applications may emerge over time. Bin Taliah provided the example of the UAE Government adoption of blockchain technology for digital transactions in this regard.

2. Digital inclusion is a human right

Digital government leaders, as well as a broader ecosystem of suppliers and partners, must be committed to narrowing the digital divide through improving Internet access and digital upskilling for people in the communities that they serve. Spigelman described how:

"In any digital national strategy, the notion of digital inclusion must be the core component. In 2021, having digital literacy is part of your civil rights. We need to focus on underprivileged communities and create culturally acceptable digital options for everyone. This is a critical issue – otherwise you're increasing the digital gap, not narrowing it."

In the Israeli context, this might mean working with Jewish Ultra-Orthodox communities to develop a "kosher" internet or tailoring solutions to specific women's issues, as well as working with schools nation-wide to improve digital literacy. Blackwell advocates thinking of "digital inclusion as a public service," and taking a service design approach to break down hurdles for individual citizens, an approach evidenced in London's [Digital Access for All](#) initiative, which includes high-speed connectivity on the London Underground and free digital skills education for adults.

3. Bring the public along with you

The development of digital public services requires deep engagement with citizens. Governments have a responsibility to make services useful, usable, and accessible for citizens, all of which depend on dialogue and iteration. Furthermore, digital public services represent a new conception of the relationship between citizens and government, changing the where, when, and how of interactions. Bin Taliah believes "governments have to shift and meet the changing expectations" of citizens, adopting new behaviours and technologies to do so. Part of this challenge will also be to incrementally encourage citizens' to adapt their own habits as the UAE aims to continue [reducing physical government service](#) locations, while still remaining inclusive. In London, digital engagement also has an increasingly central role to play in digital service delivery. Blackwell has experimented with a form of "agile governance" in creating an [Emerging Technology Charter](#), a set of guiding principles for smart city innovation, co-developed with tech industry and citizen voices through the [Talk London online community](#).

4. Higher data standards are here to stay, and this is to be welcomed

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of existing technology in government contexts and shined a spotlight on the urgency for higher data quality standards. "Health data rapidly improved during the pandemic, which has now created a standard by which other data, in other areas, will have to meet. We've now seen what good data can look like," said Blackwell. Bin Taliah argued that well structured data is critical to digital service delivery. As he described, "bridging the gap between systems offers challenges between different data structures," which makes it critical to ensure that data is "future-proof" – able to be shared securely and in privacy-preserving ways between different parts of government.

5. Scale up innovations from receptive early adopters in government

Public sector organisations are often characterised by risk-averse cultures. Innovators and digital government leaders can target and cultivate small government teams and units in the first instance to pilot emerging technologies. First introduce emerging technologies in strategic, less risk-averse “islands” with serious need, then expand once the technology is proven, advises Spigelman. Along with piloting in more receptive areas, Blackwell argues that governments should invest in an internal framework to develop a pipeline of need and effectively communicate the scale of demand to the private sector. As governments evolve their digital service capabilities, Blackwell raised the need for digital government leaders to consider where to land on the spectrum between an emphasis on developing in-house, like the City of Barcelona, versus commissioning externally.

6. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) could play a key role in government innovation in the next five years

There is a huge opportunity for growth in public digital services looking forward, from healthcare to transportation. Building on higher quality, more, and larger datasets, AI and machine learning are expected to be an important driver of growth in public services. Bin Taliah sees AI as holding the potential to help the UAE government understand citizen needs and create hyper-customised and automated solutions. To leverage government data more effectively for start-ups to be able to address core national and global health-related problems, Israel is developing a national data lake and partnering on synthetic data solutions, such as synthetic data computationally-derived from clinical health data, to advance evidence-based policymaking while overcoming privacy issues, shared Spiegelman. Blackwell believes the next service frontier, for example utilising 5G and the Internet of Things (IoT), will have important applications, including in mobility, congestion, and air quality.

StateUp is the international, multi-disciplinary insights and advisory firm for public-purpose technology intelligence, data, upskilling and advisory services. At the core of our offering is the Nebula Public-Purpose Technology Intelligence platform, a new kind of Research-as-a-Service offering designed as the authoritative source on govtech, civtech, and tech for place and planet. StateUp works internationally, with an ear to the ground on the latest technological uptake and policy updates across organisations and countries. Find out more at <https://stateup.co/>

GX Talks is a dialogue series created and hosted by the Prime Minister’s Office of the UAE. GX Talks unites government decision-makers, global practitioners and renowned innovators to re-examine and re-define government experience for the future. Government Experience (GX) is a global framework for government service excellence from the UAE. Find out more at <https://gx.ae/> and <https://gxtalks.com/>