

# Google executive running for Vermont governor post

January 2 2010, By DAVE GRAM , Associated Press Writer

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In this May 18, 2005, file photo, Sen. Matt Dunne, D-Windsor, is seen on the Senate floor in Montpelier, Vt. Would he deliver an Inaugural Address in jeans? Instantly spew out a list of Web sites in response to a question? Matt Dunne's candidacy for governor of Vermont is raising these and other questions, because in his life outside of politics, he's an executive with Google. (AP Photo/Toby Talbot)

(AP) -- Internet search giant Google is based in Silicon Valley, yet it runs its community affairs operation out of a former bread factory in an old New England railroad town, hard by the confluence of the White and Connecticut rivers.

Matt Dunne, 40, the man in charge of Google's efforts to burnish its image in the places where it has offices, keeps up with corporate headquarters through a broadband link from two video screens in the bakery's former walk-in cooler.

Dunne's use of that technology - and the [broadband Internet connection](#) supporting it - is an example of what he touts as the key to Vermont's economic future as he campaigns for the 2010 Democratic nomination for governor.

"We need to, and I believe have an opportunity to, go from one of the lowest broadband penetration states in the country to the first state that brings fiber-optic high-speed Internet to every home in the state," Dunne said in an interview. "And that's an incredible opportunity for us to move from a state that's not thought of as being a technological center to being a technological center."

Dunne, who is married and the father of two young children, faces a crowded field of four other Democrats and the incumbent Republican lieutenant governor, Brian Dubie, all vying to replace the retiring Gov. Jim Douglas. Dunne said he hopes his combination of experiences in the public and private sectors will distinguish him. Dunne won the Democratic nomination for lieutenant governor in 2006, but lost to Dubie.

Eric Davis, a retired Middlebury College political science professor, said he did not see Dunne's Google pedigree being a big factor in the campaign unless the candidate can use his Google contacts to help him build a Web site with new and innovative tools that make it stand out against other campaign Web sites.

A rival was less than impressed.

"I don't seem terribly fazed one way or another by it," said Democratic gubernatorial candidate Sen. Susan Bartlett, chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. She noted another candidate, Sen. Peter Shumlin, runs a student travel company.

"I guess you could say Shumlin's a travel executive. What's that got to do with it?" Bartlett asked.

Dunne grew up in nearby Hartland, attended Brown University and won election to the Vermont House at 22. He served four two-year terms there and two in the Senate, where he gained a reputation as a champion of economic development legislation. When Dunne was 29, President Bill Clinton appointed him to head up the AmeriCorps-VISTA program, in which he oversaw the work of 6,000 full-time volunteers. He was reappointed by President George W. Bush and held the job until 2002.

In the private sector, Dunne is the former marketing director for Vermont-based software startup and has worked for Google since 2007.

Deploying broadband and improving cell phone service statewide are keys to other issues on which Dunne is focusing his campaign. He wants to streamline and improve education through greater use of distance learning. Vermont's shrinking school-age population is making it less economical for schools to offer a full range of languages, for example. Dunne envisions a teacher traveling between schools, supplementing face-to-face student interaction with video-based classes.

On energy, Dunne thinks "smart metering," which can tell electric customers moment-to-moment how much power they're using, combined with Vermonters' famed frugality, will enable the state to shave megawatts off its power demand.

But if Dunne's campaign has an overriding issue it is to reverse the

demographic trend in which Vermont has the second-fastest aging population in the country and make the state more attractive to young people. And a key to doing that is technology, he said.

"I've heard from business people in the state of Vermont that they have difficulty recruiting engineers, because when they recruit engineers even from the University of Vermont, that engineer finds out that the home they could afford as a first home as a young engineer doesn't have broadband, they go someplace else. When they find out they don't have cell (phone) reception, even at their place of work, they choose to go someplace else."

Davis did say Dunne might be able to make a pitch about using technology to make government operate more efficiently - a goal much talked about recently given that Vermont, like many other states, faces serious budget troubles.

"Many other states allow people to do more things online and present things (on state Web sites) in a more citizen-friendly way than does Vermont," Davis said.

Dunne said he wants to move Vermont's state government to a leadership position in its use of technology. And he said he would try to import some of Google's culture as he does so.

"[Google](#) intentionally runs a flat, fast, innovative organization, where people with new ideas to solve problems are celebrated, not shut down," Dunne said. "And that's the kind of approach that we need to take in Vermont if we are going to transform the way that we do government."

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Citation: Google executive running for Vermont governor post (2010, January 2) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-01-google-vermont-governor.html>

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