A Government for the Digital Age:

A New Framework for Re-envisioning Public Sector Services

GOVERNING

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Government needs speed and agility like never before. Sophisticated retailers continually raise the bar for convenient and seamless digital transactions. Technology itself advances at a relentless pace, giving consumers new options to communicate and connect. And these new services and devices are being adopted remarkably fast. All of which drives citizen expectations for a more personalized and intuitive digital experience when they interact with public agencies.

In this new environment, government must become a platform for innovation, where citizen and partner needs can be quickly turned into results, and where new digital services can be rapidly developed, launched and refined. In essence, government must become a mechanism for taking action.

But too many governments still rely on outdated business processes and aging, inflexible technology that hamstring their ability to react quickly to emerging needs and solve new problems. The result is a growing disconnect between what citizens want from government and what agencies can deliver.

More and more government leaders understand the importance of closing this expectation gap. Eighty percent of public sector respondents in a recent survey acknowledged the importance of digital business. Yet the same survey also illustrates some of the hurdles agencies face in transforming themselves. Almost 60 percent of respondents described their organizations as slow adopters or non-participants in digital services and 42 percent said their organization lacked a coherent digital strategy.[1]

So how should agencies approach this critical challenge? Real digital transformation requires a diverse set of stakeholders — from technology officials and program managers to elected officials and other policymakers — to rethink how they work and how they use technology to support what they do.

"It's a broad discussion about using technology to change how an agency serves the public," says Todd Schroeder, vice president of government digital strategy at Salesforce and creator and former chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Digital Service Center. "It's about having a prescriptive architecture, rather than an accidental architecture that has been stitched together."

Addressing the massive technical debt accumulated by government agencies due to chronic under-investment in technology is an important part of this discussion. e.Republic's Center for Digital Government recently reported that a third of business-critical computer systems in state and local government are nearly 20 years old and struggle to meet user demands.[2]

But government doesn't just need new technology, it needs different technology. Cloud-based solutions — and in particular, cloud-based application platforms — will be key enablers to meet evolving business requirements and cope with rapidly rising user expectations.

"The only constant in government is evolution — that's how democracy works," says Schroeder. "The difference now is the speed in which government's customers expect change to happen and the exceptional experience they expect their government to deliver. Establishing government as a platform is the only way that we can align our priorities from an experience, effectiveness and efficiency perspective."

Cloud-based platforms let agencies develop cloud-native applications quickly and easily. And when these platforms are adopted enterprise-wide, applications are easily shareable across departments and agencies, which can help government leaders organically move toward greater technology standardization.

New technology is only part of the equation, however. To navigate digital transformation successfully, government agencies also must gain a deep understanding of their customers, current and future business priorities, and existing IT environments. This handbook provides a framework that government agencies can use to chart a course toward digital transformation that fits their unique needs and proceeds at their own pace.

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A Transformation Framework Built for Government

Unlike private companies where a CEO can dictate digital strategy, governments tend to be federated when it comes to decision-making and funding. They often don't operate like a single enterprise; large jurisdictions may have multiple independent agencies, all of which can — and often do — march in different directions. This is the reason why many public sector digital transformation initiatives result in siloed, duplicative efforts and overly complicated IT environments. It's simply harder to coordinate a unified approach to service delivery in government.

Effective public sector transformation strategies acknowledge this reality, and they're built to succeed in this environment. The framework outlined in this handbook enables individual agencies or departments to take their own transformation journeys while staying aligned toward a common goal and achieving more efficient, cost-effective and flexible services along the way. It may be applied to individual services or to comprehensive modernization efforts.

At its core, the framework is designed to help your agency understand who its customers are and how those customers experience your services, identify transformation priorities based on business outcomes, and modernize using an enterprise cloud-based application platform strategy. Combining this customer-centric philosophy with a common cloud-based technology platform keeps independent agencies and departments moving in a similar direction despite a lack of centralized control.

Finally, it's important to note the framework is designed to engage technical, operations and policy officials in the digital transformation process. It's meant to encourage greater collaboration and understanding among elected leaders, agency management and technology executives — all of whom must support and promote digital transformation efforts.

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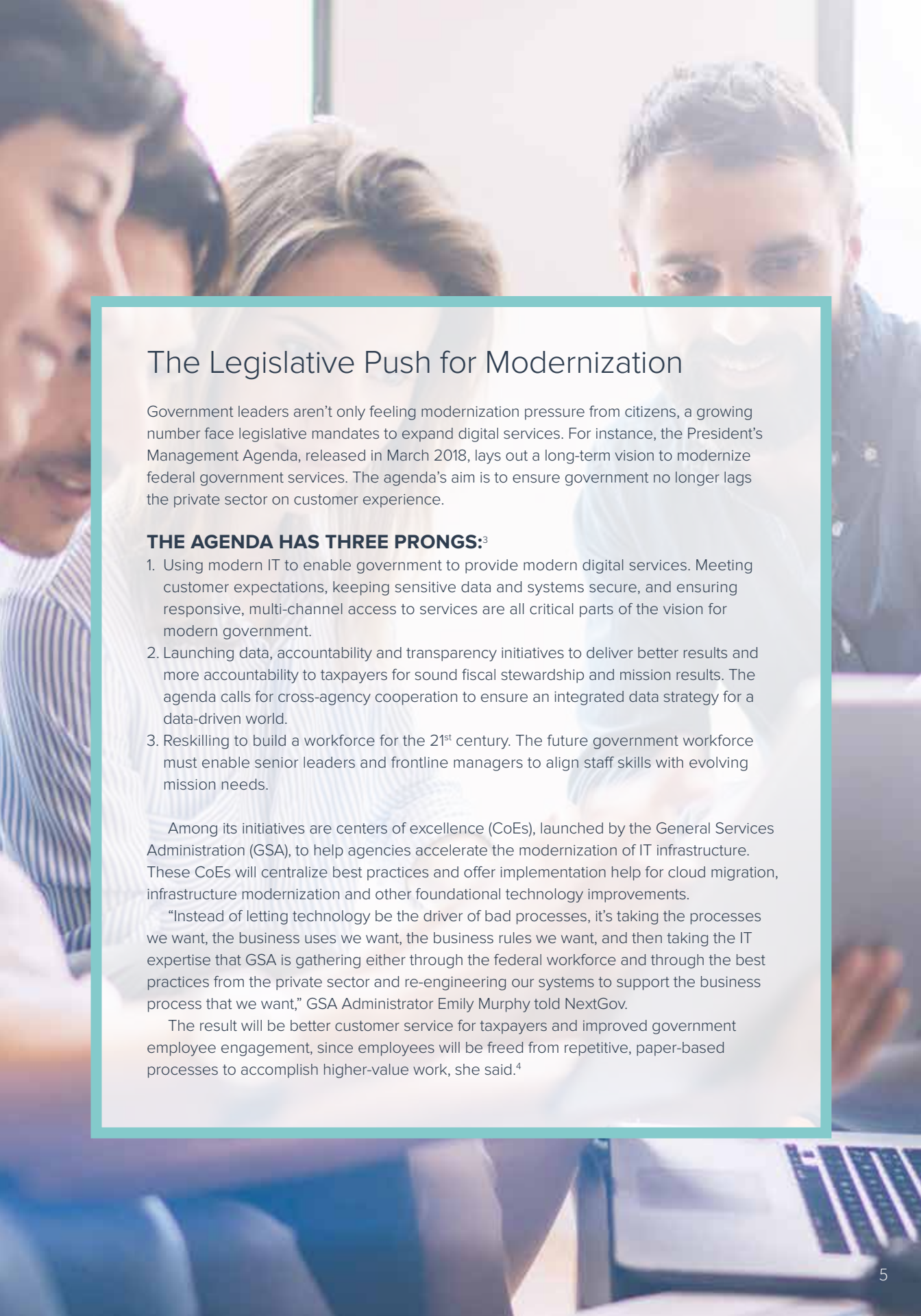

The Legislative Push for Modernization

Government leaders aren't only feeling modernization pressure from citizens, a growing number face legislative mandates to expand digital services. For instance, the President's Management Agenda, released in March 2018, lays out a long-term vision to modernize federal government services. The agenda's aim is to ensure government no longer lags the private sector on customer experience.

THE AGENDA HAS THREE PRONGS:[3]

1. Using modern IT to enable government to provide modern digital services. Meeting customer expectations, keeping sensitive data and systems secure, and ensuring responsive, multi-channel access to services are all critical parts of the vision for modern government.
2. Launching data, accountability and transparency initiatives to deliver better results and more accountability to taxpayers for sound fiscal stewardship and mission results. The agenda calls for cross-agency cooperation to ensure an integrated data strategy for a data-driven world.
3. Reskilling to build a workforce for the 21st century. The future government workforce must enable senior leaders and frontline managers to align staff skills with evolving mission needs.

Among its initiatives are centers of excellence (CoEs), launched by the General Services Administration (GSA), to help agencies accelerate the modernization of IT infrastructure. These CoEs will centralize best practices and offer implementation help for cloud migration, infrastructure modernization and other foundational technology improvements.

"Instead of letting technology be the driver of bad processes, it's taking the processes we want, the business uses we want, the business rules we want, and then taking the IT expertise that GSA is gathering either through the federal workforce and through the best practices from the private sector and re-engineering our systems to support the business process that we want," GSA Administrator Emily Murphy told NextGov.

The result will be better customer service for taxpayers and improved government employee engagement, since employees will be freed from repetitive, paper-based processes to accomplish higher-value work, she said.[4]

PHASE 1: Understand Your Customers and Put Them at the Center

Digital transformation starts with understanding who your customers are and putting them at the center of your modernization efforts. In government, your ultimate customer is the taxpaying citizen, but some agencies serve them more directly than others. Agencies that issue driver's licenses or process tax returns interact directly with citizens and businesses. But organizations such as centralized contracting bureaus or enterprise IT groups support other government agencies, which in turn may directly serve the public. Most agencies also serve a range of internal clients, including public sector employees and contractors.

It can be easy to lose focus of your customers because government agencies serve such a range of people and entities, and because they often operate within functional silos. Unlike private companies that have chief marketing officers, governments typically don't have someone overseeing the customer experience, although that's starting to change. Several federal agencies, including the Census Bureau, now have chief customer experience officers.

Along with identifying who your customers are, you need to identify what services you provide them — and more importantly, how they experience each service. Customer experience is emotional. It's the root of the dread many citizens have about visiting their local department of motor vehicles. How can you change your service to provide a different and better customer experience?

A systematic way to address these issues is to model your customer's journey. For each type of customer, track how they locate your service, request it, consume it and, if needed, get help. Watch your customers or hold user group sessions. Do they have trouble finding or accessing the service? Do they wait too long for an acknowledgment or response? How could you streamline the process and eliminate frustration?

This is more than just making users happy, as important as that is. By mapping customer experience back to your agency's mission statement, you'll see how it can advance agency goals, break down functional silos and align different components of a large, federated agency.

Focusing on user experience and understanding how it touches almost everything you do is a fundamental element of digital transformation. This requires a shift in perspective,

The Modern Government Experience

EXPERIENCE OF THE PAST

- Long lines and wait times
- Siloed departments
- Forms in triplicate
- Slow processing
- Antiquated web services

EXPERIENCE OF THE FUTURE

- Mobile service delivery
- Intra- and inter-agency collaboration
- Single view of the citizen
- Apps to speed productivity
- On-demand self-services

from performing a function to serving a customer, which helps ensure any new platform you leverage is simple to use and aimed specifically at meeting your users' needs.

Putting customer experience at the center of every decision was key to Amtrak's enterprise-wide digital transformation — an initiative that streamlined internal processes and improved transportation for citizens throughout the country.

"Amtrak is the country's passenger railroad," says Morrell Savoy, vice president of Long Distance Operations. "Whether it's a daily commuter train or scenic vacation travel, it represents the history of the country. As you meet more customers, you understand what you mean to their experience; you understand that we are a part of their experience."

The railroad recently used the cloud-based Salesforce platform to develop an app that supports the largely mobile workforce at Amtrak's Chicago Union Station and ultimately helps provide reliable train service to the traveling public. The TOPS (Train Operations) app tracks servicing and safety checks needed to keep long-distance trains running. Supervisors can now alert their counterparts in real time if there are any issues or delays and pull reports that capture performance metrics and other records.

The app brought visibility to the long-distance train turnover process that would otherwise be difficult to capture in the expansive agency. And it was designed with user needs in mind.

"We don't have a tech-dominated workforce, so we needed an application that was simple enough yet intuitive enough that it would be adopted without a ton of training," says Savoy, who started at Amtrak as a train conductor in the Washington, D.C., Union Station. "At the end of the day, we're a federally subsidized corporation, so we have to be good stewards of the taxpayer's money. Becoming efficient is what we do, and we're using technology to deliver this business need."[5]

4 Questions to Guide Your Government Experience Journey

1. What services does your agency provide to customers?
2. Will your customer experience focus on employees, citizens, partners or all three?
3. How will your agency bolster what customers love and remove what they hate?
4. What contribution to the agency's stated mission, financial goals or employee engagement will be achieved?

PHASE 2: Scrutinize and Optimize Your Operations and Business Processes

This process starts by discovering where your agency is on the digital transformation journey. Typically, agencies have a mix of old and new systems. Some legacy hardware and software runs in their data center and requires ongoing management and maintenance. Other processes have been modernized and moved to the cloud, or perhaps originated there.

Once you know which processes and systems you have in place, prioritize which ones must be modernized. This step involves identifying your agency's business capabilities and the underlying technologies that support them, as well as assessing if those underlying technologies currently meet your business needs.

In many cases, organizations can realize greater value from systems running on hybrid-cloud models that include a mixture of on-premises and cloud-based IT. For example, it may make sense to keep a legacy database in your data center, but move the customer and employee-facing experience to a cloud-based web portal.

"Existing systems have been in place for a long time and meet important compliance standards," says Casey Coleman, former CIO at the GSA and now senior vice president of global government solutions at Salesforce. "However, government needs to bring in a modern digital platform to unlock the value of that data and provide a better, more intuitive experience for both citizens and employees."

It's important for an agency to obtain a holistic view of its processes and systems, and their purpose. For instance, do current processes and systems require a lot of upkeep? Are they based on proprietary technology that makes it difficult to share data?

By answering these questions, agencies can start to identify the low-hanging fruit like manual, paper-based processes that are a

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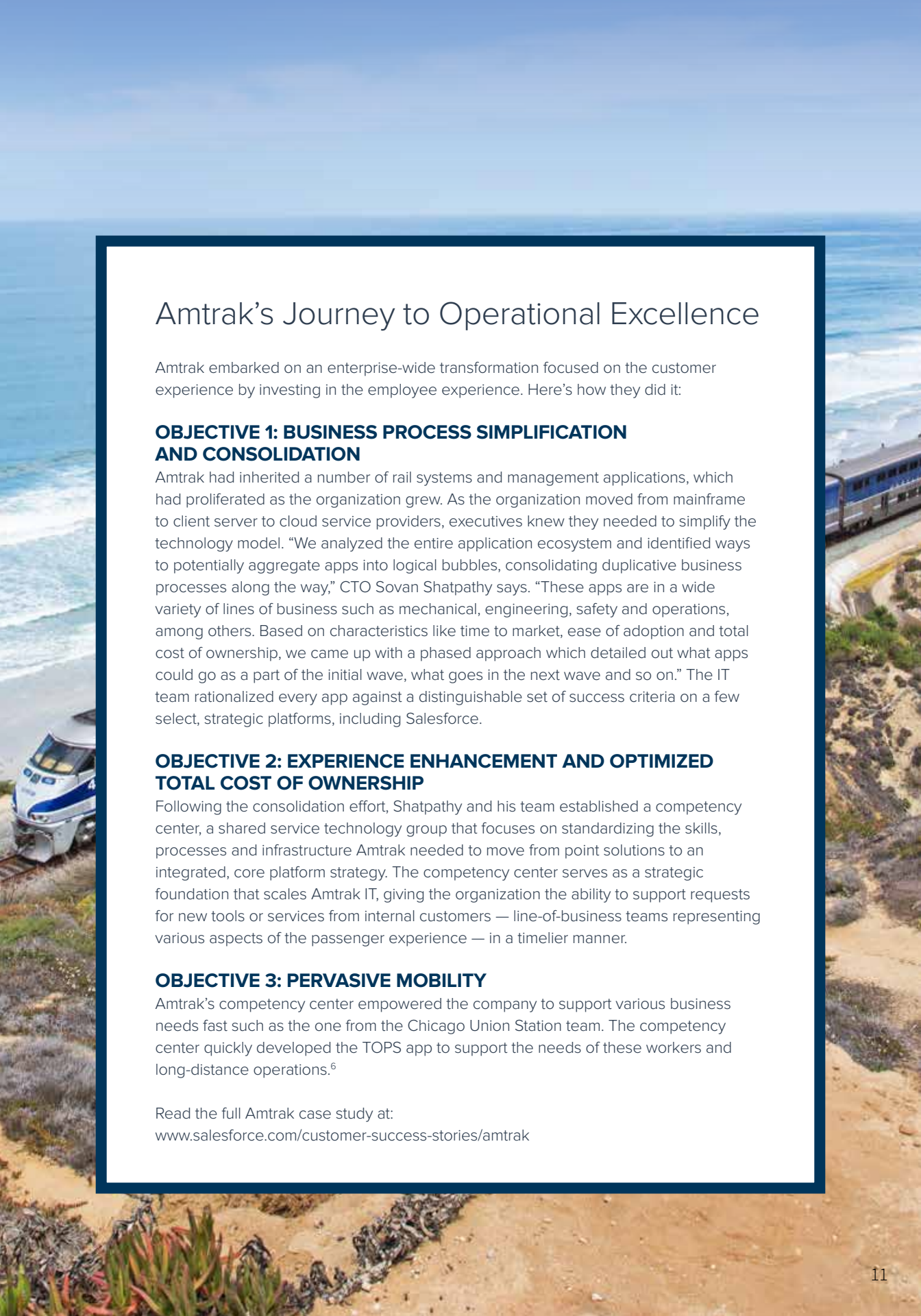

Amtrak's Journey to Operational Excellence

Amtrak embarked on an enterprise-wide transformation focused on the customer experience by investing in the employee experience. Here's how they did it:

OBJECTIVE 1: BUSINESS PROCESS SIMPLIFICATION AND CONSOLIDATION

Amtrak had inherited a number of rail systems and management applications, which had proliferated as the organization grew. As the organization moved from mainframe to client server to cloud service providers, executives knew they needed to simplify the technology model. "We analyzed the entire application ecosystem and identified ways to potentially aggregate apps into logical bubbles, consolidating duplicative business processes along the way," CTO Sovan Shatpathy says. "These apps are in a wide variety of lines of business such as mechanical, engineering, safety and operations, among others. Based on characteristics like time to market, ease of adoption and total cost of ownership, we came up with a phased approach which detailed out what apps could go as a part of the initial wave, what goes in the next wave and so on." The IT team rationalized every app against a distinguishable set of success criteria on a few select, strategic platforms, including Salesforce.

OBJECTIVE 2: EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT AND OPTIMIZED TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP

Following the consolidation effort, Shatpathy and his team established a competency center, a shared service technology group that focuses on standardizing the skills, processes and infrastructure Amtrak needed to move from point solutions to an integrated, core platform strategy. The competency center serves as a strategic foundation that scales Amtrak IT, giving the organization the ability to support requests for new tools or services from internal customers — line-of-business teams representing various aspects of the passenger experience — in a timelier manner.

OBJECTIVE 3: PERVASIVE MOBILITY

Amtrak's competency center empowered the company to support various business needs fast such as the one from the Chicago Union Station team. The competency center quickly developed the TOPS app to support the needs of these workers and long-distance operations.[6]

Read the full Amtrak case study at:
www.salesforce.com/customer-success-stories/amtrak

prime target for modernization. Automating even these seemingly minor processes can improve services and save money. One study estimates that $995 billion in value could be created by 2025 if government became just one percent more efficient in operations each year.[7]

A great example comes from the California Office of State Tax Appeals, where eliminating paper was a driver for digital transformation. The office chose to go digital after realizing a new state tax law would require shuttling legal documents among judges and attorneys dispersed between Sacramento and Los Angeles.

"If we were to print all the documents, it would amount to 20 to 30 bankers' boxes of paper going back and forth," says Kristen Kane, chief counsel for the California Office of Tax Appeals. "You can imagine the time and money saved by being able to do all this electronically."

A new e-signature solution integrated with the cloud-based Salesforce platform let the office implement a digital document strategy that saves time and money, while improving collaboration among judges and attorneys.[8]

How Colorado Pioneered Cloud Services

Colorado has been a cloud-services trailblazer since the 2004 launch of its Statewide Internet Portal Authority (SIPA). Created to develop the state's official Internet portal, Colorado.gov, SIPA helped pave the way for widespread cloud adoption by offering a variety of shared services for state and local agencies.

"It was digital transformation, although we didn't call it that back then," says John Conley, who was SIPA's executive director from 2009 to 2014 and is now a regional vice president at Salesforce.

SIPA created a portfolio of services based on the needs of its customers, Conley says. "We surveyed state and local governments about which services they'd rather buy than build," he says.

Based on the results, SIPA started offering cloud-based email, payment processing and website hosting among other services. Not only did the approach save time and money for agencies, it created standardized services with an overarching level of governance.

Before SIPA, for instance, state and local government websites in Colorado offered similar information, but they presented it in different ways and in different places. Contact information wasn't consistent from one site to another, forcing citizens to hunt for it each time they visited a different agency site. SIPA streamlined the user experience for citizens by offering free website hosting and standard web page templates to participating jurisdictions.

Today, SIPA licenses more than 80 Salesforce cloud-based applications, including the state of Colorado's Program Eligibility and Application Kit (PEAK), a web portal that gives citizens one place to apply for numerous social services benefits.

PEAK transformed customer experience for citizens who depend on state social services. Before PEAK, it took up to 45 days for the state to determine a citizen's eligibility, says Suma Nallapati, CIO of Colorado's Office of Information Technology. Today, more than 80 percent of social services applications are screened and approved in real time.

"We're processing twice as many applications per month with the same number of employees and the same budget," she says.[9]

PHASE 3: Shift Your Mindset and Modernize Your IT Infrastructure

Replacing cost- and resource-intensive legacy systems with modern cloud solutions is fundamental to speed application development and refocus public sector IT talent and budget dollars to meet new user needs and business requirements.

Right now, the bulk of public sector IT spending goes toward keeping old, on-premises systems running. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget says 70 percent of federal IT spend goes toward maintaining legacy technology.[10] And 51 percent of government and industry leaders responding to a 2017 survey said their organizations focus on sustaining legacy systems, while 30 percent said they lack confidence in the ability of government IT infrastructure to adapt to changing needs.[11]

Effective cloud strategies shift focus — and spending — away from legacy infrastructure and applications, freeing up vital resources for new projects. Ultimately, this lets agencies invest in new digital services and roll them out quickly.

In many cases, building new solutions in the cloud — and transferring infrastructure responsibilities to a third party — is the fastest and least expensive way to improve the customer experience and increase agency capabilities and efficiencies. The "click, not code" nature of cloud-based application platforms significantly reduces application development time and lets governments quickly adapt as new requirements emerge.

Empowering Business Users

The line between business operations and IT is blurring thanks to low-code application development platforms that let users create apps using simple graphical interfaces and drag-and-drop configuration tools. Almost 75 percent of IT leaders surveyed for the Salesforce 2017 State of IT report say they plan to shift some application-building responsibility to business users over the next 12 to 18 months.

With easy-to-use tools like Salesforce Lightning and online training programs like Salesforce Trailhead, business users can build their own apps without formal IT training.

That was the case for Beth Perry, a data analyst at the Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR). Perry started using Salesforce to manage a database, then became interested in what else she could do with it. She asked for tips from DIR's Salesforce administrator, a former administrative assistant who had taught herself how to develop applications. Perry then took a system admin course and started developing apps.

She continues to learn through Salesforce Trailhead and user groups. "If you post a problem or a question in Salesforce Success, you find 10 other people who have dealt with the same issue and found solutions," she says. "The Salesforce community at large is a tremendous resource."[12]

Stories such as Perry's are becoming more common as organizations seek to strengthen collaboration between IT and business. Almost 70 percent of respondents to the 2017 State of IT survey said improving such collaboration is a high priority and 88 percent said they are already using or plan to use low-code solutions.

"With cloud platforms, you can design and launch applications quickly. You may not deliver everything up front, but the beauty is that you can continuously iterate and adapt," says Conley.

The state of Texas experienced the speed and agility of the cloud firsthand when it looked for a solution to track the bills running through the state legislature. At first, the state's Department of Information Resources (DIR) tried to adapt a software program already being used by one agency, but it was too complex, costly and time consuming. DIR instead built a new app on the Salesforce cloud platform.

"In three weeks we had developed and implemented a solution in Salesforce," says Todd Kimbriel, state CIO and executive director of DIR. "What used to take months with traditional waterfall development, we can now do in weeks. And what used to take days, we can develop in minutes."[13]

Besides increasing speed and agility, a cloud platform approach can help standardize technology, even in highly federated government organizations. It gives departments and agencies the flexibility and independence to build the applications they need, when they need them — but this work is done within an overarching architecture that ensures there is some consistency to processes and workflows.

That was the case at GSA, says Coleman, when hiring and recruiting processes were moved to the Salesforce platform.

"We used Salesforce to build out standard job description templates and performance metrics that were easily accessible to offices across the country," she says. "The actual hiring decisions were left to the local leaders, but there was at least a standard process to follow."

Cloud-based digital transformation also can drive important cultural changes within your organization. These easy-to-use tools, combined with a customer-centric mindset, empower your workforce to innovate.

For instance, with fewer infrastructure and legacy systems responsibilities, your IT staff has time to partner with other departments to help orchestrate experiences, connect and analyze data, and drive operational success. They also can teach employees about agile solutions and continuous improvement.

Although IT teams will need to refocus their activities and learn new skills — rather than listing requirements and qualifying systems, IT now evaluates platforms and service providers — the shift positions them to provide greater value.

For line-of-business staff, the cloud puts tools for change directly in their hands by providing app-building solutions that don't require computer coding skills. Nearly anyone in an organization can be empowered to become part of the digital transformation process (see sidebar "Empowering Business Users" on page 16).

Finally, cloud-based transformation simplifies management and reduces the cost of running technology systems — a fundamental consideration for government organizations.

"It elevates the conversation in terms of governance and compliance," says Schroeder. "You might have dozens of different business processes, but they are all running on one piece of software. You are reducing the administrative burden enormously." When the USDA implemented this model, "it saved 70 percent of its operations and maintenance budget," he notes.

To help establish governance and ease the change management process, a best practice is to organize a center of excellence with a cross-functional team, including IT, employees and department heads.

"As easy as it is to create and deliver new capabilities in the cloud, you need a structure to make sure that the work is thoughtful and directed toward activities that will bring the most value," says Coleman.

It's All Connected and All About the Customer

By following the framework in this guide and standardizing on a cloud platform, government agencies can chart their own path to digital transformation — one that fits their unique needs and puts their customers front and center, while still fitting into an enterprise strategy. By following the three phases presented here — customer experience, operational excellence and IT modernization — governments will be positioned for continuous digital transformation.

"All these streams from front office to back office can come together, perhaps through a cross-functional team, and result in a platform that puts the agency in position to iteratively modernize other programs and other services, experiences and legacy applications," says Schroeder.

A cloud platform strategy can start on the web then be easily extended to engage citizens and customers across other channels like mobile and social media that are then integrated with agency operations or service delivery platforms, for instance. The technology and associated tools can greatly improve services to customers while also reducing costs and increasing efficiency. Formerly manual processes can be automated through the cloud yet also integrate with and use data from backend legacy systems. Processes can be constantly improved, using analytics and customer feedback.

But most importantly, Schroeder adds, all of these activities must be tightly customer focused.

"The redesign of government services has to start with the customer or citizen in mind," he says. "This is also tied to how those lines of business can operate so customer experiences happen in the right way. And then IT on the back end — you need to start with the citizen experience and work backwards to the IT portfolio. They are all connected."

By following the three phases presented in this handbook — customer experience, operational excellence and IT modernization — governments will be positioned for continuous digital transformation.

Digital Transformation Best Practices

Whether just starting or continuing down the digital transformation path, agencies should consider the following best practices:

- ✓ Start small, with a single use case, then iterate. “You don’t have to do it all at once. That’s the advantage of cloud platforms, where you don’t need to recode and maintain a complex technology stack. Rather you can focus on business functionality and continuously improve,” says Coleman.

- ✓ Learn from others. There is a lot of work being done in the cloud at the state, local and federal levels. Government offices are typically willing to share lessons learned.

- ✓ Have an engaged executive sponsor who can help create a shared vision and is a proponent of effective change. The sponsor should be available to answer questions, explain the project(s) and praise progress made. This will help ensure digital transformation is successful across government and not just within IT.

- ✓ Communicate clearly and frequently. Lack of information creates a vacuum that can be filled with misinformation.

- ✓ Establish strong, specific success criteria. Will the solution make a process 10 percent more efficient? Will it enable your call center to handle 30,000 more calls annually?

- ✓ Run development workshops that include subject matter experts and executive sponsors. “Developers used to go into a room, do their Joint Application Design Session (JADS), then go away for nine months to build a solution. That should not be happening in 2018. With today’s technology, you can develop right in front of end users and leadership,” says Conley.

- ✓ Develop an alliance between IT and lines of business. Start with the business requirements resulting from customer-centric priorities, then use IT expertise to solve them.

- ✓ Don’t shy away from mixing old and new. “We skipped reinventing some very old systems, and instead are building engagement layers on top of them. As a result, we are unlocking more value,” says Amtrak’s Shatpathy. “[Mixing old and new] enables us to support employees who are steeped in legacy system knowledge as well as newer hires who tend to be more familiar with modern approaches.”

ENDNOTES

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