

CREATING A WORKFORCE ENVIRONMENT THAT ACCELERATES TRANSFORMATION

State and local governments face many challenges when it comes to IT transformation. As they reinvent the ways they operate and interface with constituents, they must also empower their employees to meet the growing expectations of those they serve.



Government organizations need a workforce approach that not only enables employees to make informed decisions and work more efficiently, but also promotes engagement and satisfaction. This approach includes providing interconnected, innovative devices for remote and in-office use, enabling collaboration regardless of an employee's physical location, and preparing employees for changes in workplace culture. Using this approach, employees can focus on their core roles and expertise, access the right information on demand and be more productive — enabling the organization as a whole to accomplish its mission, meet citizens' needs, and attract and retain the workforce it needs for the future.

WORKPLACE DRIVERS AND CHALLENGES

The government workplace is undergoing rapid change as technology becomes more pervasive. At the same time, as a wave of new retirees leaves the government workforce, a new generation of employees will bring their own habits, values and preferences into the workplace culture.

With more than 5.3 million individuals working for state governments and 13.9 million working for local governments,¹ the task of keeping a diverse labor force happy and productive seems monumental. Government leaders are being challenged to:

Deal with labor shortages and talent drains.

Even though budget allocations for full-time equivalents (FTEs) in state and local government are increasing, retirements and a shortage of skilled labor in specific areas threaten continuity and productivity in many organizations.

A 2017 Center for Digital Government (CDG) survey found 21 percent of city government leader respondents expected to lose up to 10 percent of IT personnel in the next year. Organizations need ways to compensate for this knowledge deficit as employees take their experience and skills with them.

Attract and retain new talent. Millennials are the largest share of the U.S. workforce today, comprising more than one-third of all workers.² By 2025, they will make up 75 percent of the workforce.³ Younger workers use technology in their personal lives, and expect to at their jobs

as well. To attract and retain talent, organizations need to provide these tools and opportunities for collaboration, communication and innovation that keep employees engaged and productive.

More than 40 percent of U.S. Millennials say they would likely quit a job if the technology they were provided did not meet their standards, and 81 percent say workplace technology influences their decision to take a new position.⁴

Address disparity between public and private sector pay. Organizations that can't compete on salary and wages must offer other types of opportunity and value. Some examples include providing new employees with laptops, allowing flexible work schedules, establishing mentorships and training for rapid promotion.

Provide effective support and security for a growing mobile workforce. Many government organizations are increasing their use of mobile devices and applications to improve employee productivity.

In Pennsylvania, for example, mobile solutions allow probation officers to spend more time in the field and serve more clients by accessing data and filing information from their mobile device instead of coming into the office.⁵

The challenge is to effectively manage and secure not only organization-provided devices, but also personal devices that employees bring to work and sometimes use to conduct both personal and government business. To maximize investments in mobile technology, state and local organizations



must also enable agile, cost-effective application development and web services that support mobile devices. Only about 10 percent of state CIOs report having more than 40 percent of their applications mobile-ready.⁶

Enable rapid access to actionable data.

Employees who can easily access meaningful data can make faster, better-informed decisions. This capability is especially critical for first responders and other employees involved in public safety, but it also allows case managers, healthcare providers, public works employees and others to do a better job overall. With real-time decision support and operational insight, employees can provide more efficient services, reduce errors and redundancies, and improve communication and service delivery.

Reduce operating costs. Personnel costs account for 55 percent of local government budgets and 20 percent of state budgets, so it's important that organizations maximize the value of their workforce investments.⁷

TRANSFORMING THE WORKFORCE

The following tactics can help organizations address the challenges of the modern workplace and accelerate workforce transformation.

Empower employees to be more engaged and productive. According to the 2014 IPMA-HR Employee Engagement Survey, “engaged employees are five times more likely to be very satisfied with their job, five times more likely to recommend their place of employment to others and four times less likely to leave.”⁸ Engagement helps organizations recruit and retain employees and keep them productive regardless of where they are in their career life cycle.

With the consumerization of information technology, even longtime employees have become accustomed to anytime, anywhere interactions and the flexibility that mobile devices, remote access and other technologies enable. These technologies not only support engagement and productivity, they help reduce costs related to paperwork and travel. By freeing up time, they also help employees spend more time providing

CHOOSING THE RIGHT DEVICES

Devices — whether mobile or stationary — are the starting point for workforce transformation. They are the medium through which an employee accesses data, applications, the network and other technology.

Although mobile devices are a key enabler of workforce transformation, they are not always the best device for a particular use case. When choosing devices, a good place to start is to classify workers into categories based on their roles and work habits, and then determine what type(s) of device and support are needed for each category. In government, the main categories tend to be mobile workers who travel between agencies, remote workers, field workers and desk-centric workers. Each type of worker requires different types of devices, connectivity and applications. For example:

- **On-the-go officials and administrators** may need to access people, data and programs from anywhere, using multiple devices that can connect to a variety of displays and projectors.
- **Remote workers and telecommuters** may need to collaborate virtually and use single sign-on to securely access their desktop programs and information.
- **Case managers and other field workers** may need a standard laptop or tablet that can access records via public Wi-Fi or a telephony carrier.
- **First responders, police and other public safety workers** may need a ruggedized laptop or tablet.
- **Desk-centric county clerks** may need a workstation connected via cable or Wi-Fi, as well as dual monitors for increased productivity.
- **Data analysts** may need a bank of high-performance computers capable of processing large amounts of data connected via high-bandwidth cable.



Seventy percent of Millennials say their jobs would be easier with the assistance of artificial intelligence, and 72 percent expect to work in “smart offices” that use data from the Internet of Things (IoT) by 2021.¹⁰

services to citizens. When complemented by data analytics and automation, these technologies enable a level of productivity and innovation that transforms the way government does business.



Mobility — Although security concerns have stymied government mobile device adoption in the past, employee demand is driving change. Government leaders are taking notice of this desire for the latest technologies. In NASCIO’s 2016 survey of state CIOs, 53 percent of respondents noted that mobile devices and application projects are either essential or high priority.⁹

Mobility empowers employees and provides flexibility, but it also allows agencies to optimize resources. For example, social workers can focus on home visits instead of spending time in the office. First responders can share information in real time during life and death situations. Employees can deliver the improved services that citizens demand.

Mobility also improves collaboration among agencies and across jurisdictions. In the event of a crisis, public safety personnel can share critical information in real time.

To unlock the full potential of mobility, organizations need a comprehensive security strategy to protect devices and data. Identity and access management (IAM), encryption and strong security policies ensure mobile device usage meets internal, state and federal requirements for security and compliance. Mobile device management is especially critical as

it provides a way to manage and update a multitude of devices, and extend role-based policies across devices. Organizations must also address the use of personal devices and implement appropriate policies and security mechanisms.



Data analytics — Data analytics help employees make informed and timely decisions. Although data analytics initiatives are relatively immature in most states, 73 percent of CIOs say their state has deployed some data analytics capabilities; and 95 percent use data analytics to fight fraud, waste and abuse, particularly in federally funded health and human services programs.¹¹

The demand for greater accountability and transparency will drive increased adoption of data analytics. However, one of government organizations’ biggest challenges is that many of them don’t know where all of their data assets reside. This environment will only become more complex as the IoT produces huge increases in data. Once organizations better locate and aggregate data, they’ll be well positioned to leverage it for a range of programs.



Automation — Automation is becoming increasingly important as workforces shrink, paper-based processes become obsolete and organizations search for ways to reduce costs. In addition to increasing efficiency, automation keeps employees engaged by offloading repetitive, time-consuming tasks to machines and allowing workers to spend their time on more rewarding activities. Although people tend to think of automating manual processes (e.g., workflow

automation), automation in future-ready workplaces also includes more sophisticated tasks such as working with unstructured data (e.g., from emails, social media and the IoT), artificial intelligence and predictive analytics.

Enable collaboration. State and local agencies are increasingly adopting collaboration tools as cloud-based technologies become more popular, interoperability among tools improves, and vendors design products that meet the unique security and compliance needs of government.

Email, social media, Skype, document sharing, instant messaging, wikis and other collaboration tools help employees share knowledge and content in real time, make decisions more quickly, participate in online learning and strengthen relationships regardless of their physical location. They also reduce travel-related costs by allowing employees to “attend” meetings and trainings from anywhere.

Collaboration tools are essential to capture the institutional knowledge of older workers, as well as offer the mentoring, career advancement and learning opportunities that motivate younger workers.

They also enable the work flexibility, autonomy, transparency and collegial atmosphere that younger employees desire. In some circumstances, they may even help organizations attract top talent despite tight budgets. One study found 19 percent of Millennials would take a pay cut of more than 12 percent to work for a firm that offers flexible hours.¹²

While collaboration tools such as email and online meetings are more commonplace in the public sector, tools such as social media are gaining traction as organizations recognize they are not only legitimate business applications, but also keep workers engaged and connected.



Social media — In a survey of more than 2,000 workers, 39 percent of respondents said having access to social media sites and tools helps them be more productive.¹³

Whether internal or external, social media sites help employees identify experts and other peers who they can go to for advice, expand their professional network, gain wider recognition for their successes,

share expertise, crowdsource solutions to problems, generate interest for new initiatives, stimulate ideas and discussion, and gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of other employees. Organization-sponsored social media networks also increase organizational transparency and help managers and higher-level leaders keep in touch on a more personal level with employees.

Support and prepare for a cultural shift.

Rita Reynolds is the chief information officer for the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) and also serves on various national committees, including the Telecommunications and Technology committee for the National Association of Counties (NACo), and the Cyber Security committee of the National Association of State CIOs (NASCIO). With nearly 30 years of experience helping local governments with their technology programs, she is well aware of the vast change in technology over the years and the impact it has on workers.

“When you talk about the industrial revolution, it’s nothing compared to the technology revolution,” she says. She points to self-driving cars as one example of the sea change underway. “Self-driving cars will revolutionize county government — from bridge and road maintenance to utilization of driverless trucks and buses.”¹⁴

To take full advantage of this revolution and IT modernization efforts, government leaders need to be sure their workforce and workplace culture are ready for change — whether change entails open floor plans, greater mobility, flexible schedules, workflow automation or some other innovation. Doing so requires leaders to focus on employee needs and implement policies and procedures that reflect the new way of doing things.

Reynolds and other leaders suggest the following best practices to successfully shift workplace culture:



Define the ideal culture. To cultivate a workplace culture that supports transformation, organizations need to know what types of behaviors and skills they need, assess where they stand and then take steps to correct or improve as necessary.



Prepare workers for change. “One of the biggest mistakes that organizations make is assuming all current staff wants to convert into something more modern,” says Reynolds. IT leaders should not assume their department is ready for change. Even with a solid technology solution and sufficient training, some workers may need time and encouragement to adjust. Others may be concerned about job elimination if the organization automates processes or implements other innovations that reduce the need for human intervention. When these challenges arise, it’s important for senior leadership to be honest and firm about the changes required.



Exercise leadership. “Change tends to be more successful in organizations with strong leadership,” says Reynolds. Effective leadership helps ensure individual employees and the entire workforce stay on track with transformation. Good leaders set clear goals, communicate expectations, provide support for change, create metrics for success and hold individuals accountable for meeting requirements.



Understand how to retain good workers. “Getting to know your staff and letting them know they’re important goes a long way,” says Reynolds. Organization leaders can learn a lot by listening to employees and soliciting their input on things that are important to them. It also helps to read current literature and talk with peers across other agencies to learn their best practices for attracting and retaining different generations of workers.



Hire interns. Interns can help fill gaps in the workforce — often more readily and cost-effectively than other types of workers. Many organizations avoid hiring interns because of concerns about the training and support they need. Hiring interns for less skilled tasks can be a low-risk way of determining whether they would be suitable for full-time work and greater responsibilities.



Update acceptable use policies. Organizations must address a wider range of use scenarios as technology evolves and traditional ways of doing things change. Telecommuting, mobile device usage, internet access, cloud services, the IoT, collaboration with external partners — all of these and more must be considered in order to maintain security and compliance.

MOVING FORWARD WITH WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION

Workforce transformation entails creating a truly digital work environment that encourages collaboration, increases engagement and productivity, and reduces costs. With the right technology solutions and support for the cultural shifts that are required to transform the workforce, organizations can empower employees at all levels to do their best work and better serve citizens. In doing so, they’ll also be prepared to attract and retain top talent.

This piece was developed and written by the Center for Digital Government Content Studio, with information and input from Dell EMC.

ENDNOTES

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