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5 'Musts' of the New Digital Experience Government

Table of Contents

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Introduction

It's no secret: government is undergoing a massive digital transformation. Various agencies have been "going digital" since the move to the web in the early '90s, but to be a digital organization today means providing citizens, public servants, active duty military, and veterans an exceptionally easy and accessible front door to government services. With today's confluence of new channels, new technologies, citizen hack-tivists like Code for America, innovative public sector leadership, and digitally demanding users, government organizations have an opportunity to set an example for every organization in how they serve their users. Digital transformation enables governments to be more responsive and better aligned with user needs than ever before.

A recent report from the Altimeter Group defines digital transformation as "the realignment of, or new investment in, technology and business models to more effectively engage digital customers at every touchpoint in the customer experience lifecycle." Digital transformation cannot stop there. Transformation is also about making improvements to internal efficiencies and productivity. It shouldn't just be about increasing user engagement, it should also provide substantial cost savings to your organization.

The realignment of, or new investment in, technology and business models to more effectively engage digital customers at every touchpoint in the customer experience lifecycle.

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A Model for Digital Transformation in Government: The Five Musts

There are five key ingredients your public sector organization needs in order to enable, and more importantly, sustain, exceptional digital experiences. I call these the five "musts" of the new digital experience government.

There is no magic here. These are pragmatic, actionable components of a sustainable digital strategy. Starting with one of these is a huge step in the right direction – you don't have to implement them all at once, with the notable exception of No. 5: Cultural Support. Cultural Support is a necessary success factor for all other components of this model.
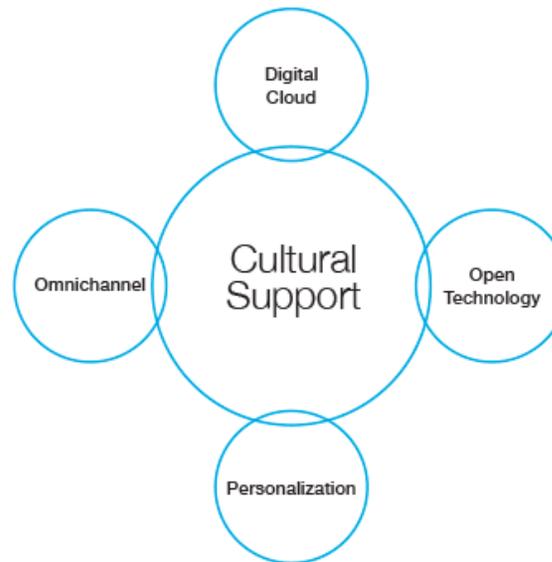
1. Digital Cloud. Organizations need a cloud platform and services optimized for enabling secure, reliable digital experiences.

2. Open Technology. Open source software and open interfaces enable rapid innovation and response to change.

3. Personalization. Optimize citizen experiences through testing, targeting and defining user segments. Use those segments to deliver the right content at the right time, directly to your users.

4. Omnichannel. Structure content "atomically," manage it centrally, and publish it across multiple channels like mobile, web, and email.

5. Cultural Support. Successful digital transformation efforts require shared goals and collaboration across IT, executive leadership, external affairs, procurement and project management teams.

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The First Digital Experience Government 'Must':
The Digital Cloud

Before coming to Acquia, I worked as a web content management architect and consultant for numerous public sector enterprises, including the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). At DHS, my main project was the strategy, design, and implementation of a Web Content Management as a Service (WCMaaS) offering from the Office of the Chief Information Officer (and all DHS component organizations such as FEMA, USCIS, etc.). Two objectives of this effort were the consolidation of multiple CMS technologies onto an open standard, and the migration of public facing sites out of in-house data centers into the cloud.

Based on a thorough evaluation by the enterprise architecture team, as well as previous successes at DHS, Drupal was chosen as the enterprise standard CMS framework. DHS chose to leverage the General Services Administration (GSA) Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) BPA on Apps.gov to procure a public cloud hosting provider.

"Offering IaaS on Apps.gov makes sense for the federal government and for the American people,"said Vivek Kundra, Federal Chief Information Officer, in a release. "Cloud computing services help to deliver on this administration's commitment to provide better value for the American taxpayer by making government more efficient." (Federal News Radio)

DHS selected CGI as their provider, based partly on the fact that only a few of the vendors (CGI being one of them) had completed their FISMA moderate ATO at the time. CGI is a very competent infrastructure provider and continues to provide excellent support and service for DHS. Due to the nature of this contract vehicle however, only IaaS, not a true platform, was procured.

Cloud computing services help to deliver on this administration's commitment to provide better value for the American taxpayer by making government more efficient.

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IaaS requires an organization to build systems on top of infrastructure to handle change control, build and deploy (DevOps), testing, monitoring, and security. DHS spent considerable resources creating a bespoke platform inside of CGI for the management and operations of their WCM cloud. In addition to the cost of the infrastructure and its support, DHS must dedicate valuable internal resources to manage and maintain the platform they've created in CGI, as well as manage the communications between DHS and CGI, between DHS and other vendors such as Akamai and Acquia, and between DHS headquarters and component organizations. In essence, what has been created is a custom government system inside of a cloud infrastructure provider's data centers.

While there is no question that DHS has reduced software licensing costs by choosing Drupal, and set a precedent for moving an agency's public web presence to the cloud, the efficiencies gained by changing from one data center to another are questionable.

Many large cloud hosting providers serving government agencies advertise the ability to support mission critical Drupal solutions, but more often than not these providers are infrastructure focused, and offer VM's in a data center with canned configurations and some level of (often very expensive) managed support. It's true, they may meet the requirements on paper, but buyer beware. Moving your website from an internal data center to a managed cloud host is no different from moving a car from your own garage to a rented space down the street. In both cases, you'd need to provide expensive maintenance and care for the car, no matter where it was garaged.

In contrast, a true digital cloud platform such as Acquia Cloud provides tools and APIs for DevOps, monitoring and health checks designed for managers and non-technical users, application level support and SLAs, and deep integration between the application and the platform. In this instance, using the car analogy, you would not have to worry about keeping the car running, or providing regular maintenance. You would not need to provide the team responsible for keeping it tuned up and ready to roll at any time. That would be a service provided for you.

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When the State of Georgia made the move to Acquia's Digital Cloud in 2012, they projected $4.7 million in cost savings based on the freedom they would gain by leveraging a true digital platform with application level support. They knew that putting the support in the hands of people whose full-time job is to support the cloud would bring them cost savings and expertise over maintaining it in-house. Expertise, time management, optimized cost, and scalability were some of the benefits they realized.

"Experts can monitor our platform and servers 24/7, providing recommendations to updates and changes if needed at a moment's notice. We have had some issues with DDoS attacks where Acquia was able to bring our websites back up and running in a fraction of the time compared to other state government websites who experienced the same attacks. The Acquia Cloud gives us room to continue to grow without hesitation or fear of hosting size and limitations." (Nikhil Deshpande, Georgia Technology Authority)

Your key takeaway from this first "Must" is that it's not enough to "host" in the cloud. Instead, your organization needs a digital cloud platform that significantly offloads the operations, information security, and change control burden from your IT team, freeing them up to focus on serving the mission and your users. Significant cost reduction and realigning your resources toward innovation and improving service to your citizens can only take place if the burden for "keeping the lights on" shifts from your internal team to your vendor. At that point, your team can shift focus to their primary mission, and what they know best.

The Acquia Cloud gives us room to continue to grow without hesitation or fear of hosting size and limitations.

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The Second Must, Part I: **Open Technology in Government**

If the Digital Cloud is the well-staffed garage I alluded to earlier, then Open Technology is your dream vehicle in that garage - safe, fast, efficient, maintainable, and customized just how you like it.

Open Technology as a term encapsulates a few different things - source code as well as technical approaches and organizational structures. I'm going to focus on Open Source Software, but will touch on communities, architecture, and open data as well.

Open Source Software (OSS)

According to the Open Source Initiative, "Open source software is software that can be freely used, changed, and shared (in modified or unmodified form) by anyone. Open source software is made by many people, and distributed under licenses that comply with the Open Source Definition."

Because anyone can contribute to OSS, innovation is rewarded. I like the analogy of sharing a favorite recipe among friends. You can have the freedom to follow Grandma Charlotte's kugel recipe to the letter, but you can also adapt and improve the recipe before passing it along to your friends. These kinds of adaptations serve the common good. The best variations will naturally dominate.

Compare this approach to proprietary, closed-source software where the code and roadmap are controlled by a single organization. You wouldn't have learned about that kugel recipe from your Grandma. You paid for it from a vendor, and they own the rights to it. You can't change it, or share it. It's someone else's property. If there is a problem with it, you can't just make the change yourself, because the ingredients are the vendor's own proprietary items as well. You have to request an update from the vendor. They may get around to it if enough people ask, or they may not. It's possible that a key ingredient may no longer be available. Then your recipe is useless, or you pay a premium to source that ingredient. The bottom line? Trust Grandma and your friends.

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Open Communities

OSS projects come in all shapes and sizes. Linux, Apache, and Drupal are some of the largest and most successful communities. Drupal currently has over 95,000 active contributors, over 35,000 contributed projects, and over 1 million registered community members.

The common themes that make OSS communities like Drupal so successful are diversity, transparency, openness, and collaboration. Linus Torvalds, the Linux community lead, compares good OSS to scientific communities in a 2006 interview with CNN: "I often compare open source to science. To where science took this whole notion of developing ideas in the open and improving on other peoples' ideas and making it into what science is today and the incredible advances that we have had. And I compare that to witchcraft and alchemy, where openness was something you didn't do."

Diverse communities, whether we are talking about forests or open source projects, are more robust, adaptable, resilient, and secure. Elinor Ostrum, who shared the 2009 Nobel Prize in Economics, is most well known for her study of governance and natural resource management. In her essay, Diversity and Resilience of Social-Ecological Systems (from the book Complexity Theory for a Sustainable Future), Ostrum explained how sustaining diversity is important for increasing a complex system's capacity to cope with change, reducing sensitivity to loss of specific elements, and enhancing human well-being. "When successful managerial methods for supporting diversity avoid the trap of letting one solution dominate, and provide a richer experience and knowledge base… diversity in general increases the capacity of systems to tolerate disturbance, learn and change. This capacity will be one of the most crucial assets of societies in the coming times of rapid global change."

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OSS in Government

Over the last 10 years, government adoption of open source software has skyrocketed. As an example, Drupal now powers nearly 34% of all US government websites. The Australian federal government has decided to standardize on Drupal through their govCMS initiative. In governments around the world, "open by default" is becoming policy and mandate.

The United Kingdom mandates a preference for open source software in government, stating that "Where appropriate, government will procure open source solutions. When used in conjunction with compulsory open standards, open source presents significant opportunities for the design and delivery of interoperable solutions."

India has followed suit and has gone so far as to require procurements to include open source: "RFPs must include a specific requirement for all suppliers to consider open source software, along with closed source software, when they submit their bids for the project. Should they choose to exclude open source, suppliers are to provide justification for doing so in their bids."

Here in the USA, through the work of the Obama administration and the establishment of Digital Services teams such as 18F and USDS, open source is recommended as a part of several memorandums and policies, including the the CIO Playbook, a series of 13 best practices to help government build effective digital services.

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The Second Must, Part II: **Why Open Source Matters to Government**

Why OSS Matters to Government

There are several reasons why governments are putting increased attention on open source solutions.

No Lock-in

With OSS, governments maintain complete control of their applications and data. They are not locked into proprietary formats, feature sets, integrations, roadmaps, or agendas of a particular proprietary vendor. OSS solutions can be extended, customized, and maintained using common standards and technologies.

Going down the road with a single vertically integrated technology stack from a commercial vendor may seem like a great idea upfront. It may demo well, or have the name of a huge corporation behind it. The vendor may tell you that you don't need anything else, because all the features are included in their own proprietary, fully integrated set of applications.

After the contract is signed however, it may be difficult to find skilled resources able to support the solution. You may find that a "one size fits all" stack doesn't fit your organization as well as you thought, and because you have no ability to customize or change the solution you are dependant on the vendor and can't get services out to your citizens quickly enough. And of course, you're obligated to pay expensive licenses whether or not you use all components of the solution.

OSS is free. Of course, to be successful with open source technologies, you'll need a good vendor support system, and that has associated costs, but you're not actually paying for the technology itself, and you're not locked into anything, either. At Acquia we like to think of our professional services as training wheels for customers. We'll help you be successful, but our goal is to empower you to help yourselves over the long term.

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Security

Because the source code of OSS is available for anyone to test or examine, vulnerabilities in OSS are found more quickly, and are able to be addressed immediately. OSS facilitates code reviews, static code analysis, and compliance with common standards. Some OSS projects get more security attention than others, and Drupal has been widely recognized as having an excellent security team and track record.

It's important to note that just because a particular OSS project is secure, without proper management of that system's boundaries (platform, infrastructure, and APIs), security can be easily compromised. Acquia's Digital Cloud Platform is specifically designed to deliver Drupal experiences securely.

Agility

Governments can be free to innovate at the pace of change, not at the pace of a vendor's release schedule. There is no waiting for a vendor or an expensive contractor — government has the control with OSS to deliver services and content to citizens right when they need it.

Tony Scott, the US Federal CIO, talks about the primary value of cloud and open source as faster time to market, not just cost savings.

Re-use

With OSS, the government can build something out of a set of reusable components, which have a proven track record of security and scalability, and they can do so on their own timeline. They can leverage the work of the larger open source community for best practices, configurations, and contributed code.

Drupal is architected for reuse with a collection of modular components that you can put together in different combinations in order to solve a particular business problem. Drupal currently has over 35,000 contributed projects available ranging from integrations with CRM and email marketing tools, to FISMA compliant password policy templates, to responsive "skins" known as themes. These reusable components help governments build upon the work of others and not waste resources re-architecting functionality that is already available.

Speed to market. Speed to solution. Speed to meet the needs of whatever our citizens need. We've got to draw the line, and say we're going to do everything we can to get faster and faster and FASTER to be competitive in the global economy.

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Alignment with Civic Values

Open source software embodies the values of democracy, transparency, diversity, and freedom. Many government organizations have contributed open source software to the community, sharing their innovations for others to benefit from.

Open Data

With the Open Government Initiative of 2009, Obama directed US government organizations to publish open and machine readable data as the new default. The executive order states that making information about government operations more readily available and useful is core to the promise of a more efficient and transparent government.

A great example of this is HealthData.gov, an open data solution recently deployed by Health and Human Services (HHS). It tells stories about health data, and allows a citizen to download and interface with those data sets, as well as build their own apps. HealthData.gov is powered by Acquia, NuCivic, and DKAN (a Drupal distribution focused on open data).
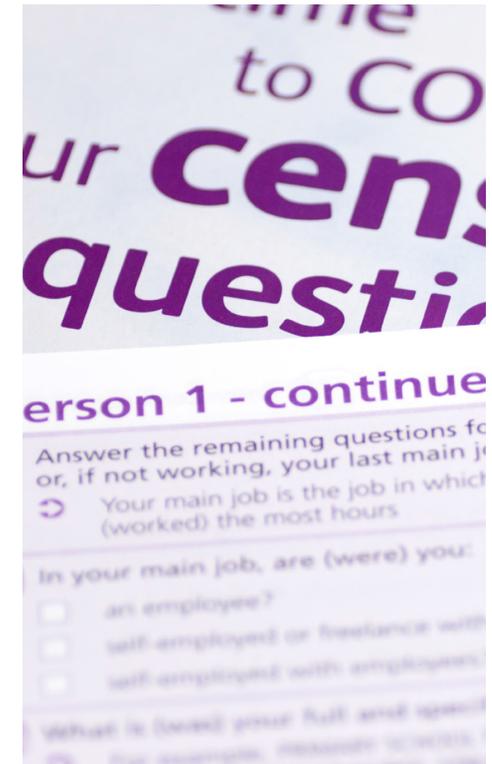
Open source software embodies the values of democracy, transparency, diversity, and freedom. Many government organizations have contributed open source software to the community, sharing their innovations for others to benefit from.

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The US Census Bureau is another good example. They've amassed a great deal of data over the years, which they've exposed to citizens who use it for innovative things, like building mobile apps. One particular app, Dwellr, allows you to find your ideal place to live. If you're wondering "where should I move?," the app uses Census data to spit out recommendations about where you might be happiest living in the country.

Parting Thoughts — Don't Go it Alone

Government agencies considering a move to open technologies, or looking to maximize their existing open technology investment, need to identify a trusted partner who has experience with enterprise government scale implementations, and a history of working with open technology. Whether you partner with a third-party vendor team, or develop in-house, you want to make sure that the team you're working with has the skills and resources needed to excel with an open source execution, and if they don't have those resources immediately available, that they can work with a vendor like Acquia to help get them up to speed.

Starting right from the beginning with a strong discovery and architecture is absolutely critical, because with open technologies, there's no prescriptive method that will dictate step one, step two, and so on for building the right solution for you. Open technologies are flexible and modular, which is what makes them so powerful and appealing from a technology perspective, but you've got to have the team behind you to drive the change.

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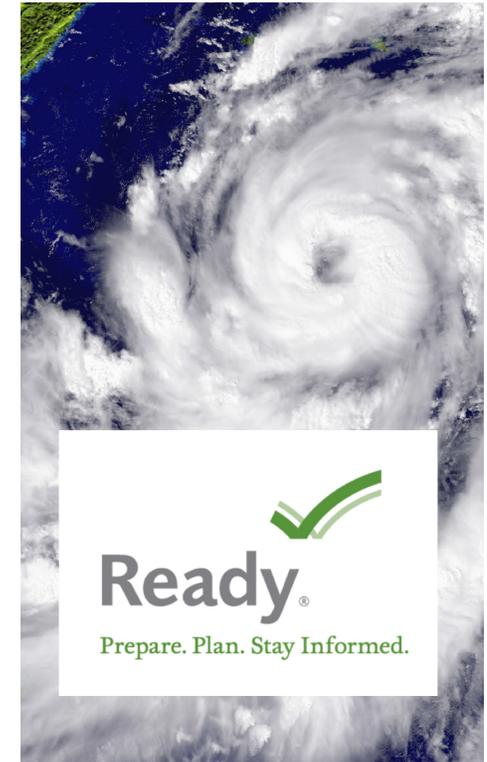# The Third Must, Part I: **Privacy and Personalization**

Personalization of user experiences will be the next major paradigm shift in government IT.

Imagine a strong hurricane is about to affect your region. You, like many people, are not as prepared as you could be. The storm is projected to make landfall within the next week and you start to go into panic mode about your lack of preparation. You have questions, too, about your flood insurance, FEMA, evacuation, and your children and pets. The TV news suggests online resources like Ready.gov, and you take some time on your lunch break surfing around the site for information. Later in the day you when you've taken your laptop home, you open your browser again to get more information.

Would you want your experience on Ready.gov to be tailored to your geographic region, the fact that you are a homeowner with kids and pets, and to be presenting you the kind of relevant, specific disaster preparedness information you have already shown interest in through your past browsing activity? I certainly would. Otherwise I would waste time clicking through all sorts of stuff I wasn't interested in just to find relevant information every time I visited the site.

It's not difficult to extend this type of scenario across many use cases:

– Veterans and their families having improved access to relevant benefits and services (think mental health vs. survivor benefits)

– Business owners being guided through the maze of licensing, permits, and other regulatory affairs (restaurateur vs. daycare provider)

– New residents and visitors to a region looking for information on activities and services (sports fanatics vs. families with small children)

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Being able to tailor an experience that personally addresses the needs of the end user is not a new idea, and in fact most users are accustomed to personalization in their everyday lives. In a day and age when people can get what they need, when they need it, through whichever channel they desire, and with relative ease -- government agencies must offer comparable experiences, or risk becoming irrelevant.

That said, government organizations are finally realizing the power and importance of implementing a personalization strategy. Basic personalization techniques like targeting and testing are simple enough to implement, and can educate and inform your team for future success. Leveraging personalization technology such as Acquia Lift enables governments to stop making assumptions about who their users are and how they will behave, and instead let their actual behavior and attributes inform the experience.

Privacy and Personalization

A common objection to implementing personalization technology in government is privacy concerns. In reality, there is no current legislation or policy that says a government agency cannot provide personalized experiences to users. Governments can provide personalized experiences. What policy says is that governments must not abuse PII (personally identifiable information), must clearly communicate to users what they are doing with it, and must give users a way to opt out.

In the US federal government, OMB Policy M-10-22 is the current definitive reference on personalization technology:

The central goal is to respect and safeguard the privacy of the American public while also increasing the Federal Government's ability to serve the public by improving and modernizing its activities online. Any use of such technologies must be respectful of privacy, open, and transparent, and solely for the purposes of improving the Federal Government's services and activities online.

> *Government organizations are finally realizing the power and importance of implementing a personalization strategy. Basic personalization techniques like targeting and testing are simple enough to implement, and can educate and inform your team for future success.*

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The policy goes on to define inappropriate use and usage tiers of personalization technology. Acquia's personalization technology encompasses tiers 1 and 2:

Tier 1 – single session. This tier encompasses any use of single session web measurement and customization technologies.
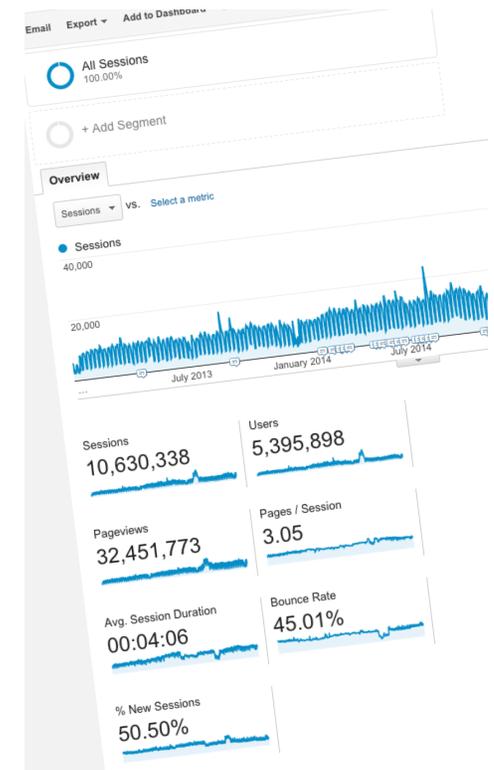
Tier 2 – multi-session without PII. This tier encompasses any use of multi-session web measurement and customization technologies when no PII is collected (including when the agency is unable to identify an individual as a result of its use of such technologies).

Finally the policy outlines what agencies need to provide for opt-out, documented privacy policies, and approvals:

Privacy policies must explain in detail usages and opt in/opt out procedures. For Tier 1 and 2, no additional approvals are needed, but they should provide opt out (either agency side or providing instructions/means for client side). "So long as the agencies (1) are in compliance with this Memorandum and all other relevant policies; (2) provide clear and conspicuous notice in their online Privacy Policy citing the use of such technologies, as specified in Attachment 3; and (3) comply with their internal policies governing the use of such technologies.

Governments commonly use technologies (such as Google Analytics) that fit into these tier definitions. Acquia Lift uses similar tier 1 and 2 tracking and allows anonymous personalization with absolutely zero tracking or storage of PII (Personally Identifiable Information).

While it's true that agencies are asked to walk a very thin line with their personalization strategies, the benefits far outweigh the concerns. When implementing personalization technologies, agencies should choose a flexible solution that has the ability to provide personalized content while following even the strictest of privacy policies.

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The Third Must, Part II: **Implementing Personalization**

Personalization for Government: Where to Start

The first steps towards creating a personalization strategy involve observing your users and collecting basic user data. If you can find out basic demographic information, and a basic browsing history (both on your site and across the web), then you'll start to understand not only what types of people are visiting your website, but why. Once you have enough background information, you can start to implement some personalization initiatives, like AB testing. This involves making a simple modification of an element or elements from any given web page and tracking user behavior given the two different test elements - 'A' and 'B'. The elements could be things like different headlines, or different calls-to-action, which you'll measure against each other to see which is more effective. Effectiveness is measured by number of actions taken, and AB testing will help you determine which action - A or B - will be more effective.

The other keys to introducing personalization are segmentation and profiling. This sounds a little scary to some people in government, but a lot of that has to do with a misunderstanding of what those terms mean in this context. Profiling and segmentation are simply ways to group like users so that they are aligned by behaviors and other defining characteristics. Let's say, for example, that you have a group of users coming to your site from Washington DC. You see that they're coming from the DC area, so that may become a geographic segment that you identify.
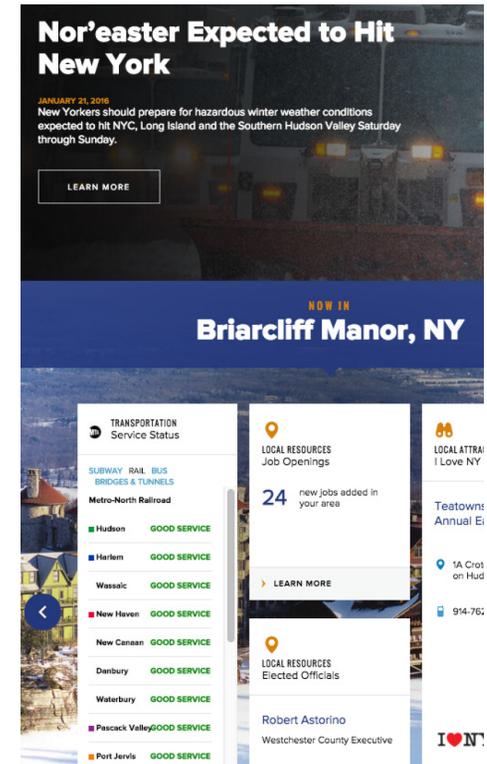
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Maybe you want to further narrow that segment down to users that are coming from DC AND have a .gov domain. That may be a segment of users that you can safely determine are government employees, given their defining information. You can also segment users based on behavior, either off-site or on, which tells you what content and information they're looking for. If you've got content on your site that you've worked with your development team to align with taxonomy or to a categorization of different types of audience interests, it's nice to be able to see a certain group of users looking at that specific content - especially when it's the right group of users!

The other aspect of personalization that's important here is tying in information about users from other sources. Information collected online comprises one data set, but you may also have data collected from in-person interactions, or through call center conversations. Being able to merge all of these different data sets into one database will help you make the most of your personalization strategy.

The ultimate goal here is to collect and use customer data to inform how you build the citizen experience. The more information you can collect, the more personalization you can apply, and the happier your users will be.

Citizen Experience Personalization in Action Today and Beyond

The State of New York homepage is a great example of personalization on a government website. If you go to their homepage, it actually shows you information that is specific to your geographic location in New York. If your browser can't determine where you are physically, then you can type in your zip code for accurate details. While this is very basic personalization, it's certainly a start. Once the State of New York homepage knows where you are, you'll see things like jobs available or events happening in your area. It can also tell you whether the subway or rail system is having any issues.

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The country of Aruba is another great personalization example. They have a tourism website that uses personalization based on the time of day you're browsing. So depending on when you visit the site, you'll see imagery that is consistent with the time of day wherever you are. Browsing at night? Maybe you'll see a beautiful moonlit beach. Browsing in the morning? You might see a sunrise shining through some palm trees. It's very subtle, but it's a nice way to tailor the experience.

This kind of personalization is already taking place across the web, but government agencies will need to take it to the next level to be relevant into the future. They must be able to push personalized information out, instead of waiting for consumers to come looking for it. Generations will drastically change. Boomers will retire. And digital natives will become the norm. If agencies aren't armed and ready for this new generation of users, they will risk becoming obsolete.

Personalization in Government: How to Implement

Government organizations that are considering making any changes to their digital experiences should consider personalization early on, during the discovery phase when they are identifying the objectives of their project. If personalization is a priority, it needs to start from the very beginning. Utilizing a tool like Acquia Lift to track people's behavior and collect user data is a great place to start, and from there you can plan and launch initial personalization initiatives.

It's important to remember that personalization isn't just a switch you can flip and forget about, it's a practice that you have to engage in constantly. You need to continue monitoring user behavior on your site, and continue optimizing and re-optimizing content based on the behaviors you observe. The more you learn, the better you can personalize, and the more refined your citizen experience will become.

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The Fourth Must: **Omnichannel**

Government agencies have historically delivered digital experiences to citizens that are cumbersome and disjointed. Until recently it's been an inherent, if not necessary, business trait given the information, data, and transactions shared between governments and citizens. There are more rules and regulations dictating what a government organization can and can't do than apply to other industries, which has often been a barrier to delivering the kinds of digital experiences that citizens have in their everyday lives, and now expect from their governments. To meet those expectations, and the demand for better customer service, many government agencies have been transitioning to open source technologies, implementing personalization practices, and focusing on citizen priorities. Key to continuing this trend is the implementation of an omnichannel strategy.

What is Omnichannel?

Omnichannel is essentially the act of interacting with your consumers wherever they are — delivering content to any device, through any channel, at any time. Digitally-savvy consumers who are always connected and on-the-go expect to be able to conduct their business, pay their bills, or make a purchase when it's convenient for them. With an omnichannel strategy in place, organizations are able to make the right information available at the right time, and to make the user experience across channels, and across devices and media types, seamless. Channels could include laptop, tablet, mobile, in-person, or call center, where users can interact with you through websites, email, social media, and more. Most recently, this strategy is becoming not only appealing, but imperative for government agencies, as citizens become more demanding of these types of citizen experiences.

Omnichannel is also about reusable content, and a create once, publish everywhere (COPE) approach to content management. Large government organizations often maintain hundreds of websites, and the ability to automatically syndicate or curate content across sites is a huge efficiency.

> *Omnichannel is essentially the act of interacting with your consumers wherever they are — delivering content to any device, through any channel, at any time.*

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Why Omnichannel for Government?

Think about how citizens interact with online business services on a day-to-day basis. They can do virtually anything they want, from checking out a library book online, to transferring funds between financial institutions, to monitoring where their children are -- all with a few short swipes on a mobile device.
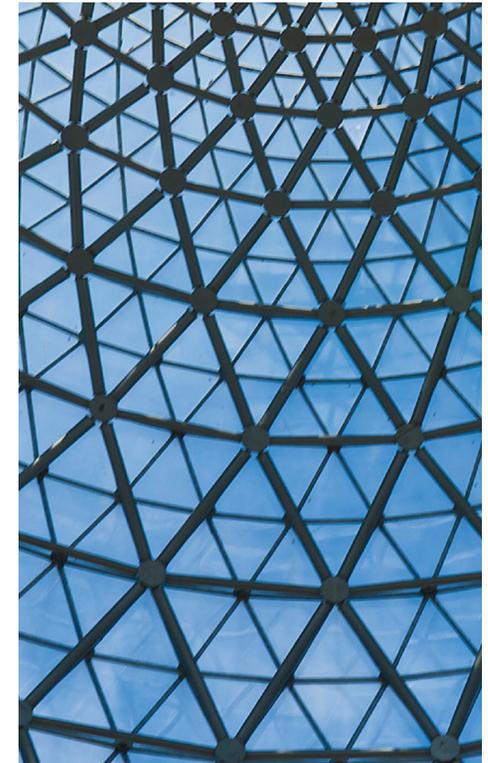
Everyday consumers expect to be able to act on a whim whenever and wherever they want to, and this expectation is being extended from the private sector to every aspect of their life -- including government interactions. Citizens are no longer giving government a free pass for not providing the same caliber experience as the private sector, and as consumers continue to live in a mobile-first, digitally connected world, it's going to become increasingly important for governments to make their own processes more accessible and more efficient.

According to a recent report by the U.S. Federal Reserve, 87 percent of U.S. adults have a mobile phone, and 71 percent of those mobile phones are Internet-enabled smartphones. This proves that for government agencies, implementing an omnichannel plan is non-negotiable — much like developing a personalization strategy, or implementing an open technology foundation. If they're not accessible for citizens on-the-go, they'll quickly lose that important consumer connection they must build to achieve digital success.

The benefits of an omnichannel strategy aren't limited to citizens as the end users, however. By using an open source technology like Drupal that supports multiple content types and devices, employees have the ability to "create once, publish everywhere." This method makes the publication and maintenance of content much more efficient and streamlined.

How Do You Implement Omnichannel in Government?

The key here is to implement right from the start. Just like when implementing a personalization plan, you need to incorporate an omnichannel initiative during the discovery and content strategy phase of your project. You should be thinking about where you want your content to be published and in what format, and then architect your project with that in mind. Working with a vendor that has expertise if your team doesn't, and choosing a technology like Drupal that is designed for enabling omnichannel, will get you started off on the right foot.

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The Fifth Must: **Cultural Support**

What is cultural support?

Cultural support is an integral part of creating a cohesive work environment, and successfully implementing major change in an organization. It lays the groundwork upon which a collaborative, communicative, efficient team can be built. But what exactly is cultural support? I define it as having the right buy-in and the right loud voices advocating for change inside of an organization. In my experience, most government agencies have a lot of silos. There are IT groups responsible for operations, support groups responsible for communications, and public affairs departments whose job it is to get content out to the public as quickly as possible. Often, there'll also be a front office that is in charge of marketing and messaging. All of these distinct groups must work together to execute on the mission of a government agency: providing information and services to citizens.

What often happens, however, is that these disparate groups go in different directions. There aren't clearly established avenues for them to communicate through, so the silos stay separate. This means that a really critical success factor in the process of digital transformation is to try to make those communication points stronger, which will in turn help to eliminate those silos. All of the things we've been talking about in this series on digital experience government — the cloud, open technologies, personalization, omnichannel — these are all dependent on an environment with strong cultural support. They depend on having IT, communications, public affairs, and the front office all working together towards one shared goal.

It usually takes at least one person who is a squeaky wheel to initiate the change that leads to cultural support, somebody who is not afraid to stick their neck out there, or to be a champion for change in the organization. We've already seen some great examples of this in government.

Richard Spires, CIO of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Keith Trippie, formerly the director of the ESCO office, were champions for moving DHS to the cloud, and for using an open source platform. They initially encountered a lot of resistance when trying to move to open source, but persevered and were able to rally a team behind them. In doing so, they have been able to demonstrate the value of open source, and even more so, demonstrate how risks can be minimized. Without those two champion voices, those initiatives never would have succeeded.

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Why is cultural support critical to successful digital initiatives in government?

Doing digital well is all about connecting with people and creating relationships. So when a government agency is pursuing digital transformation, it's not about technology as an end to itself, it's about technology as an enabler to facilitate better relationships between the government and citizens, and between the government and businesses, employees, and other governments.

The bottom line is this: a good culture is made up of lots of people, and is shaped by the way we do things. In order to do better and be better, we need to focus first on improving relationships through better communication and better alignment.

What are some examples of cultural support used in government projects?

Rick Holgate, formerly of ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives) saw a lot of value in moving to the cloud, and standardizing with open technology. The inherent speed and agility provided a lot of added value, and is one of the core values that he infuses his organization with. By influencing different people in Information Assurance, security, IT, and communications, they're all able to see the same themes, and to work towards the same goal. Thy recognize as a team that they need to do better, be more agile, and be faster in the way that they operate, in order to help their citizens, businesses they work with, and law enforcement. When the opportunity to partner with Acquia arose, Steve was quick to lead his organization in that direction, and has been pleased to find that as an organization they're able to execute much faster, with greater agility, and in alignment with organizational values and objectives.

How can government organizations best take advantage of cultural support in their projects?

This one is simple. Find a great leader, enlist the services of a great partner, build your organization around an open source foundation like Drupal, and align your team towards the same goals on day one.

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