ACQUIA

EXPERIENCE DIGITAL FREEDOM

How U.S. Government Agencies Can Offer Constituents an Improved Online Experience

U.S. constituents expect government agencies to improve the delivery of digital services. Here, we look at the major challenges to achieving that – and how government bodies can better serve the public online.

Introduction

Your organization can deliver the streamlined, personalized web experiences and online services constituents expect.

Developments in technology are transforming nearly every industry — and government is no exception. Today, federal, state, and local government agencies are seeking to improve the way they engage with constituents online, and how they deliver public services. Here, we'll take a closer look at the challenges, benefits, and the next steps in this journey — and how government agencies can enable constituents to reap the benefits of an open, collaborative approach to digital services.

Digital Transformation Efforts Benefit the Public Sector as Much as the Private.

In the private sector, businesses are undertaking digital transformation initiatives to help reduce costs, boost employee productivity, improve the customer experience, and gain an advantage in an increasingly competitive business environment. But a digital transformation can be as vital to the public sector as it is to private enterprise. Agencies and organizations of all kinds are striving to replace time-consuming manual processes with digital alternatives.

Leaders from government agencies at all levels acknowledge the need to improve their digital presences and streamline the management of multiple websites. They also understand that constituents are consumers, and that they have increasingly high expectations when it comes to online engagement – regardless of whether they're dealing with the private or public sector.

In a **2017 study by Deloitte and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's** *Sloan Management Review*, **more than 80 percent of public sector respondents said digital business is important for organizational success.**

Thanks to services like Netflix, Uber, Dropbox, and more, consumers have become accustomed to being able to access the services they need quickly and easily, regardless of what device they're using – and they expect the same thing of all the services within their life.

It's no longer enough for government agencies to build basic websites and browser-based content that frustrates the user and fails to give them what they require. Constituents now demand cross-channel experiences, with content that is contextually relevant to their needs and delivered on any screen, across any operating system.

With this in mind, public sector IT agencies are looking to overhaul their aging websites to provide streamlined, personalized, user-centric web experiences and online services to constituents.

In a Deloitte survey of 1,200 government officials from more than 70 countries:

78%

said digital capabilities allow their employees to work better with constituents

82%

said improving the customer experience and increasing transparency are prime objectives of their organization's digital strategy

Navigating Around Digital Speed Bumps

Public sector agencies and departments responsible for affecting this transformation face some significant challenges in delivering a constituent-centric digital experience. In a 2017 study by Deloitte and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's *Sloan Management Review*, more than 80 percent of public sector respondents said digital business is important for organizational success. At the same time, 42 percent also said their organization lacks a clear and coherent digital business strategy, and 58 percent described their organization as slow adopters or nonparticipants.

Siloed systems and outdated technology also present significant challenges. As William Eggers writes in *Delivering on Digital, the Innovators and Technologies That Are Transforming Government*, "Most governments rely on a sprawling patchwork of systems to identify and manage information about people, using everything from passwords to smart cards to biometrics. At the same time, the data must be tagged so that only the right users have access. Unfortunately, **these elements rarely come together in a way that seems convenient or logical to the end user**, whether it's a constituent, a business, or even a public employee. Constituents typically can't file their taxes without re-entering information several times; agency employees are often locked out of buildings they should be able to enter because ID cards are handled building by building, or regionally. These disconnects can be frustrating at best and crippling at worst."

Unfortunately, there are some characteristics inherent to the public sector that can also slow the agencies trying to accelerate digitization. An often-prolonged procurement process, constrained budgets, multiple layers of approval and other factors can conspire to thwart the efforts of IT departments within the public sector.

Apply These Ideas to Overcome Barriers

Successfully changing that culture requires listening to staff, communicating the need for change, and equipping employees with modern technology — and that includes harnessing the power of open collaboration.

The public sector needs to leverage open standards, interoperable technology, shared platforms, and reusable business capabilities to deliver the end-to-end services demanded by their constituents.

Importantly, a digital transformation must put the customer — the constituent — at the center of the effort. According to *Implementing a Citizen-Centric Approach to Delivering Government Services* from McKinsey, "The key to good digital services is understanding the user's perspective. Governments must be willing to remake products, processes, and policies around what constituents want."

"By digitizing, governments can provide services that meet the evolving expectations of citizens and businesses, even in a period of tight budgets and increasingly complex challenges. Our estimates suggest that government digitization, using current technology, could generate over $1 trillion annually worldwide"
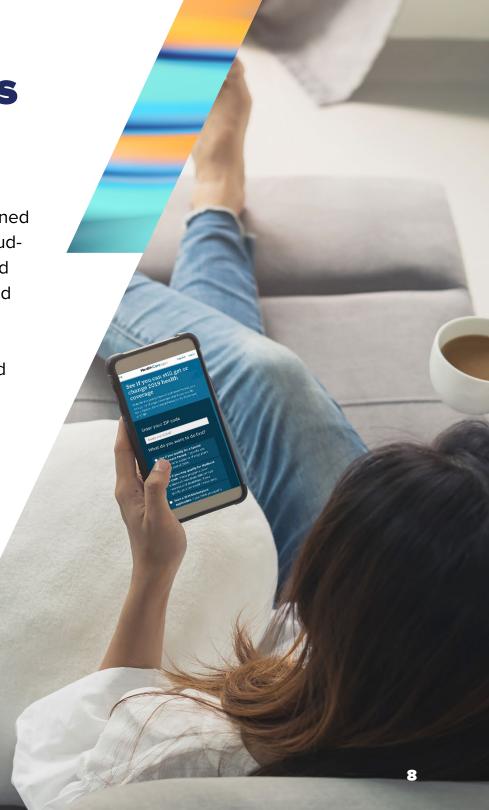
McKinsey - Transforming Government through Digitization

Put Practical Solutions to Work

There's a good reason that the digital-native services mentioned previously have become so successful: their mobile- and cloud-focused operating models are designed to make it as fast and convenient as possible to accomplish the tasks that they need to complete. They have evolved to recognize that users are principally concerned with outcomes, and that as long as a service delivers the desired outcome, they are not concerned with how they engage with it.

This means agencies should be moving away from fixed or siloed on-premises systems, and taking full advantage of cloud-based microservices and new decoupled architectures that can provide flexible and differentiated experiences for the visitor.

Digital is a means to differentiate and innovate. By adapting to deliver modern digital services, government and public sector agencies can ensure that they are able to provide the essential services that their community needs, whenever and wherever they need them.

Embracing a Cloud-based, Open Source Platform

An impressive example of the benefits of this approach can be found in the City of Boston. Faced with a 10-year-old website running on an outdated content management system (CMS) that couldn't support its needs, the city chose Acquia to help set the standard for how governments can support their constituents with digital resources.

The new website aimed to redefine what constituent engagement could be. Responsive design was a priority, and the site had to meet all accessibility requirements and guidelines. Over the course of the project, we migrated more than 20,000 web pages and one million words to the new boston.gov. The redesign was delivered under budget, and just 11 months after the kickoff meeting.

Acquia's Drupal-based architecture now enables the city to utilize a large ecosystem of developers to adapt the website to users' changing needs. The city has also released the source code to the public domain, enabling anyone to point out problems, suggest improvements, and use the code in their own community.

The Obama Presidential Library website provides another illustration of the power of open source. President Obama's time in office has been distilled into an easy-to-navigate, rich digital experience, powered by Drupal. A virtual library, it offers an interactive timeline of Obama's eight years in office, along with video and photographic history, and links for academic researchers and historians.

CASE STUDY

The Australian Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE) wanted to publish its State of the Environment (SoE) report online as an alternative to the 1,500-page hard copy it traditionally publishes.

For this, the team at the DoEE needed a modern, flexible platform that would accommodate all past and future reports and offer a comparative analysis of each. This involved bringing complex data and insights to life for a variety of stakeholders, while remaining compliant with the Australian Government's digital service standard.

Working with Acquia, the DoEE was able to leverage readily available modules to quickly build the online SoE report. The flexibility inherent to Drupal also allowed the DoEE to develop new functionality, enabling them to accomplish tasks like building interactive graphs that made complex scientific data accessible.

The platform allows readers to compare findings with the previous assessment, search for specific trends, interact with more than 300 maps and graphs, and filter the report's content by theme.

Conclusion

Federal, state, and local government agencies face a unique set of challenges in their pursuit of making public services simpler and easier to access. They need to partner with a specialist that can help them navigate their digital transformation journeys – one that has experience reducing the administrative burden for government agencies and departments, enabling greater collaboration, and providing a seamless digital experience for its constituents.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

— **Government agencies at all levels are looking to overhaul aging websites, and replace them with streamlined, personalized web experiences and online services for constituents.**

— **However, government agencies face cultural and societal challenges around their digitization efforts.**

— **Today's constituents have high expectations for online services.**

— **Acquia has helped government agencies worldwide deliver ambitious digital experiences at scale.**

— **Acquia's Drupal-based architecture enables organizations to manage multiple websites simultaneously and respond to constituent or team requirements rapidly with new features or services.**

How Acquia Can Help

Acquia is committed to the U.S. public sector. We offer the infrastructure, people, skill set, and support to help solve the digital challenges government faces.

Any digital service must be tailored to each agency's individual requirements, from a small city council to a major federal government department. Requirements, such as accessibility, and regulations must be satisfied. The most effective and efficient approach involves building platforms that others can build upon, and providing resources like APIs that others can use. The Acquia platform is open and built to be API-first, making it easy to meet an organization's specific needs and suit its environment.

Acquia has been granted an Authority to Operate (ATO) by the U.S. Department of Treasury under the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP). FedRAMP is a government-wide program that provides a standardized approach to security assessment, authorization, and continuous monitoring for cloud products and services.

The federal government spends hundreds of millions of dollars a year securing the use of IT systems; FedRAMP provides assurance to agencies that the appropriate security and risk management practices are in place for their cloud properties. Only cloud providers that meet the strict provisions of FedRAMP gain this certification.

The security, reliability, and agility of Acquia's agile platform enables government departments and agencies to properly align their resources and deliver on their mission.

The benefits are clear:

Simple
Spend less time building, and lower your development and maintenance costs.

Scalable
Grow to meet demand, increase efficiency, secure your data, and streamline your workflows for developers and marketers.

Intelligent
More accurate data and automated insights to personalize customer journeys.

To learn more about how Acquia can help transform your own organization's customer experience, visit www.acquia.com/solutions/government

CONTACT ACQUIA

United States
888-922-7842

France
+33 01 79 97 25 70

United Kingdom
+44 1865 520 010

Australia
+61.2.8015.2576

Canada
647-953-4270

ACQUIA