What are the drivers and challenges to improve employee and citizen service delivery with an online portal?

Yeatts: Simplifying the user experience is critical — whether the user is a citizen, employee or customer agency — but that is difficult given the siloed systems used to deliver information and services. Many existing portals are specific to an individual system, so it’s frustrating for users when they must create separate logins and work with different interfaces. Users also often repeat information or resubmit documents because different departments don’t have a shared database or document repository. With a centralized service portal, multiple service catalogs can be accessed from a single homepage. This one-stop shop gives service requesters a modern, simplified, consumer-like experience.

Dilley: Transparency and continuity are also drivers for improving online services. Users and leaders both need to trust the information that government systems deliver so they can make the right decisions and take the correct action. A service catalog integrated with a service management platform helps service owners get real-time visibility into order volume, speed to fulfillment and automation levels. Service fullfillers get complete insight into service demand and inventory levels. Fulfillment activity is tracked to produce an audit trail and enable service requesters to readily check on status.

How can a platform approach to delivering IT services support an online service center? What benefits can be realized with this approach?

Yeatts: A service management platform allows you to develop a catalog of standardized services, which makes requests easier for both IT and customers (employees, other departments, agencies or citizens). Customers can clearly see which services are available and the standard delivery timeframe. IT can define workflows to route the catalog requests and identify which requests, such as password changes, can be automated. Both IT and department leaders benefit from the increased service visibility and accountability that’s possible when everything is delivered in a single catalog from one service management platform.

Dilley: A service management platform can cover all online government services, not just services to Consider

These services are particularly suited for digital delivery via an online portal or catalog:
 ✓ Employee requests, including IT, HR, finance and facilities services
 ✓ Customer agency requests such as application development, compute and storage, cloud services and support services
 ✓ Citizen requests such as permit and license applications and document requests

Features of a transformational service center
 ✓ Status lookups and notifications
 ✓ Automatic categorization and routing of work
 ✓ Targeted content delivery
 ✓ Easily customizable design
 ✓ Agent chat integration
 ✓ Cross device compatibility
 ✓ Faceted search
 ✓ Self-service and knowledge look-up
IT services that are delivered internally. For example, the platform can receive alerts from device sensors and route them to the correct system and person. What’s more, the platform can apply machine learning to analyze the alert content and activate a process, such as scheduling a maintenance visit before a device fails.

Yeatts: In addition to providing your customers with access to services, it’s important to provide them with access to information. That should be designed into your service portal. We are all more efficient if we can quickly find an answer to a question instead of waiting for someone else to give it to us. A well-designed knowledge base helps customers readily get the information they need. It also helps preserve institutional knowledge, protecting against brain drain when people retire or move to another job.

A digital service center is a premier example of how a CIO can broker IT and business resources to deliver better services to all constituents.

How can an IT department begin the transition to a service management platform?

Yeatts: Start by looking at the services and website forms that are used most frequently. Identify all the different ways and places someone can access or request those services now and whether you can consolidate those access points. Also identify which processes require a lot of handoffs and how you can standardize and automate that activity. What bogs people down on a regular basis?

Dilley: In some cases, you may need to overcome how stakeholders are vested in their department’s systems and way of doing things. People fear losing something they’ve spent a lot of time and effort in designing. IT can address this by showing how the benefits of a consolidated and automated process outweigh any perceived loss. Finally, understand this review will be an iterative effort. You’ll continue to look for more services and processes to bring onto the platform to deliver a better experience for citizens and employees.

What Governments Are Doing Today

Governments and agencies at all levels are creating digital centers to address a range of internal operations and community services.

In Washington state, when the Department of Health replaced multiple request systems for 20 different programs with a single platform for service delivery, 66 percent of users adopted the self-service portal; service delivery times were cut in half; and customer satisfaction scores increased from 77 percent to 90 percent.

In Minneapolis, the IT team developed a single portal for employee services. Today, CityLife Portal addresses HR and IT services, with plans to add facilities, finance and other departments serving city employees. CityLife includes a service catalog, a product catalog, case management and a knowledge base.

The Texas Department of Information Resources offers state agencies, higher education institutions and local governments an online catalog or “marketplace” of standard services for cloud computing, web application development and support, and information security.