Drive innovation in government with a single platform
Introduction

For years, people have been putting pressure on their governments to modernize the way they provide services. Fast, efficient, and convenient is the end goal. But the reality is that most governments underdeliver in experience.

Digitizing the front-end delivery of government services is a step in the right direction, but this merely lays the foundation for more profound changes that are necessary.

Truly transforming the way services are delivered requires digging into the heart of operations and the processes that deliver services. It’s about how agencies get work done and the systems used to move work and information throughout and between agencies.

How many systems does an employee need to access to answer someone’s questions? How many steps does it take? How many people are involved in the process, and how is information shared?

How work “gets done” influences how quick and easy it is for employees to do their job and respond to people, but recent research conducted by ServiceNow suggests that emails are still the dominant form of workflow.

Modernizing technology and processes to improve speed, convenience, and efficiencies has grown in importance for governments, and was escalated to a top priority when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

More than ever, people needed government services—and needed to be able to access those services digitally and from the device of their choice.
At the same time, the sudden switch to remote work forced agencies to reconsider the ways employees advanced work through the organization. Immediate answers were needed to address issues that once seemed in the distant future. How will traditionally office-bound workers access the information they need remotely? Do they have all the right technology tools at home to get work done? How can governments maintain secure infrastructure in this environment?

And while governments around the world have ambitious digital transformation goals, there are major roadblocks that are slowing progress.

- Agencies have invested heavily in legacy systems—they want to keep those systems, but these systems are also the reason why data and information remains siloed.
- Data security is another major concern.
- New technology can bring new risks, but so does old technology that isn’t properly maintained.
- And budgets are tight, so any new digitization initiatives must deliver value fast.

These are all critical issues government agencies face as they embrace cloud, artificial intelligence (AI), and automation technologies that are key to transforming service delivery and back-office operations. The challenges are not insurmountable, but selecting the digital tools to help drive digital transformation efforts is crucial.

Governments around the world are accelerating technology investments.

The Indian government’s spending on IT is expected to reach $7.3 billion in 2021, a 9.4% increase over the prior year. Software—which includes application, infrastructure, and vertical-specific software—will be the strongest growth area.

This paper will examine the challenges, changes, and potential impact of digitization in three key areas:

- Transforming customer and citizen services
- Enabling a more dispersed workforce
- Securely managing data
Transforming customer and citizen services

Frustration is mounting with slow, inefficient systems—especially when it comes to public services. Citizens are fed up with long delays for seemingly simple tasks. If drones can drop pizzas from the sky and AI can deliver a bag of groceries to your doorstep, why can’t government simplify how someone gets basic questions answered? This growing frustration fuels a lack of trust in government.

The need for change is clear, and governments around the world are responding with a new vision for the future of citizen services. For example, India established Digital India to create a more “digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.” One of the critical pillars of the program is a focus on using IT to simplify and make government processes more efficient, and therefore more effective, across different government domains.

In other countries, like Australia, ambitious goals have been set to create hyper-personalized, easy-to-use digital experiences. Instead of making people go through individual agency websites for information, they will have one portal to access all government bodies. The way people receive support during key life events is also changing. Citizens will have more options to personalize and share information across multiple data systems. Take, for example, the death of a loved one. The Australian government wants to make that experience less of an administrative burden for its people. Instead of needing to provide a death certificate to multiple agencies, the individual would fill out a death certificate, which they can attach to their MyGov account. The person then determines which systems to share the information with, automatically routing it to the right places. In their ideal future state, the Australian government will proactively notify its people about the financial support available to them, along with relevant counseling and support services.

This vision isn’t unique to Australia. Governments around the globe are all working toward this ideal state of anticipatory government where peoples’ needs, and potential problems, are predicted based on data analysis.
Enabling a more dispersed workforce

The way that work gets done inside agencies isn’t just frustrating to people; it aggravates employees too. To do their job, it’s common for employees to get trained on how to use a web of systems that house different pieces of information they need. And because of strict security requirements, it’s not easy to access data maintained by different departments or agencies. Work grows more complex when a task requires interagency collaboration. The layers of people, technology, and systems complicate service delivery.

These challenges already presented a clear case for reforming the public sector’s approach to collaboration and getting work done. However, the need to abruptly shift to remote work because of COVID-19 placed additional pressure on the public sector. Suddenly, employees found themselves in uncharted territory, needing to use systems and technologies originally designed for on-site access only. To keep work flowing, agencies quickly deployed security solutions to protect people data.

The shift to a remote workplace changed how employees worked too;

- Virtual meetings replaced spontaneous water cooler huddles.
- Paper documents no longer made sense without face-to-face interactions.
- Agencies started rethinking what type of work needed to take place in a traditional setting and what could be digitized and completed virtually.

83% of government executives report that process automation is making a significant positive impact on their organization. It helps agencies gain efficiency and speed by eliminating redundant data entry, improving data quality, and reducing errors.

Source: Deloitte survey (May 2021)
Enabling a more dispersed workforce

Through this process, agencies started to realize the benefits of remote working and a hybrid workforce. As the stressors of the pandemic lessened and employees continued to work remotely, productivity increased. Without the distractions of an office, meetings became more effective and processes more efficient. Suddenly, the future of workforce recruiting looked different. If employees were successfully serving people without being on-site, why should future hires be required to reside within a specific region?

Now, agencies across the world are increasingly considering adaptive workplaces. This concept offers boundaryless access to the right talent and the flexibility to easily evolve based on the agency’s changing needs and its employees. The concept of borderless employees, which allow employers to access talent wherever they reside, and boundaryless opportunities for employees, which enable people to join companies regardless of their location, will frame the workplace of the future AND the future of work for people.

But to make this hybrid workplace possible, agencies need the technological infrastructure. With the right combination of digital tools and technologies, agencies can bring together:

- Databases
- Cloud services
- Existing desktop apps
- Web-based apps
- Automate common requests
- Reducing time on getting work done

This helps employees access cross-departmental information through a user-friendly interface. With these supports in place, employees can best serve people—no matter what their location.
Securely managing data

Delivering modern government services means harnessing data. Consider governments’ responses to the coronavirus. Governments needed to quickly process massive amounts of data produced by tracking the virus’ spread. For many agencies, this charge to stand up a real-time response was challenging.

In today’s digital world, governments have a wealth of data at their disposal. Still, siloed systems, teams, and security protocols can make it challenging to take full advantage of it. Too often, government leaders must make decisions based on lagging indicators from data that may be days, weeks, or even months stale depending on how many layers of approvals it went through to get to a current decision-maker.

At the same time, data security is paramount. Governments protect some of the world’s most sensitive data—from people’s personal information to classified national security intel. The more valuable that data is to governments, the more attractive it is to cybercriminals and malicious actors.

To make the right decisions in real time, protect national security, and deliver more personalized experiences for people, governments must provide real-time data access to those who need it while keeping classified information out of the wrong hands. Agencies must be able to quickly detect abnormal access patterns, even as remote work makes that exercise increasingly challenging.

Cybersecurity (54%) and cloud computing (54%) top the list of technologies expected to play an essential role over the next two years in digital transformation.

Source: Deloitte survey (May 2021)
Securely managing data

Ultimately, agencies need a data management approach that is agile—and secure. With the right tools, agencies can accomplish both goals and better leverage data to accelerate their missions. That’s one of the many reasons why governments are embracing more strategic use of cloud technology.

One important trend in this area is data residency. Governments increasingly want control over where their data lives and whether it leaves the country. In these cases, governments should look for cloud solutions built on in-country data centers that comply with local data protection standards, like the Infosec Registered Assessors Program (IRAP) in Australia or the Multi-Tier Cloud Security (MTCS) Standard in Singapore.

Another growing concern? Combating cybersecurity threats. With an increasing number of security endpoints across agencies, it can be challenging to see threats. Governments need a unified view of all their security threats—with clear prioritization and faster resolution.

At the same time, governments also need better tools to visualize their data across systems. They need to break down data silos and build unified dashboards that allow them to see—and respond to—trends and insights in real time.

Using and protecting data will be a significant priority for governments—and they need to unify and upgrade their digital infrastructure to rise to the challenge.
Conclusion

The pressures to digitize are only growing stronger, making it increasingly difficult to ignore the need for change. Now is the perfect time to consider concerns that bubbled to the surface during the pandemic and ask:

What internal processes frustrate employees and slow down their ability to get work done?

What causes delays and backlogs?

What challenges have impeded the success of recent digital initiatives?

What security concerns surface in discussions around cloud, AI, and automation?

Where are the major congestion points when it comes to responding to people’s needs?

Breaking down deeply entrenched silos and digitizing manual processes are complicated changes to navigate, but they are fundamental to giving government agencies the speed and agility they need to better serve people and the community.

With one cloud-based platform to connect people, functions, and systems, ServiceNow helps agencies accelerate their digital transformation goals. Discover how your agency can drive innovation in service delivery and back-office operations with ServiceNow.