Microsoft

The Digital Transformation of Citizen Services

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Bringing citizen services into the digital age

With the rise of e-commerce, apps and other always-on digital services, private-sector companies are raising the bar for customer experiences. Their impact has already been felt in government, where manual processes and long waits discourage citizens from getting the services they need. Citizen services are falling behind and are typically not prepared to deliver on the now ubiquitous promise of seamless, connected experiences.

Having a website, call centre and information desk isn't enough. Citizen services need to be streamlined to empower citizens and government employees alike. When essential information can be accessed and updated securely from any location in real time, governments can better serve their populations and even forecast future needs.

In this eBook, you'll learn how real governments are improving citizen services through digital transformation – using cloud-based tools and experiences to reimagine how people, data and processes come together and create value. From saving taxpayer dollars to avoiding hazards, Microsoft solutions are already helping local, state and federal agencies work more intelligently.

Tap into the fourth industrial revolution

It used to be that agility and disruptive innovations were the hallmark of startups. They had the advantage of responding quickly to shifts in the market. Especially in the tech industry, startups were often early adopters of data tools that defied traditional models and helped them make improvements to the user experience constantly.

Now, innovative governments are embracing cloud technology to deliver streamlined experiences for employees and citizens. In addition to web apps, the Internet of Things (IoT), machine learning, bots, speech recognition tools, and more are changing citizen services and how they are delivered.

In the midst of the fourth industrial revolution, these tools have evolved and scaled, giving organisations of all sizes access to cost-effective, secure digital solutions with tremendous computing power and storage capacity. Organisations are producing more data than ever, and now it can be accessed on demand and across a growing range of devices. Artificial intelligence and IoT connectivity are helping government agencies identify actionable trends and insights from the vast oceans of data.
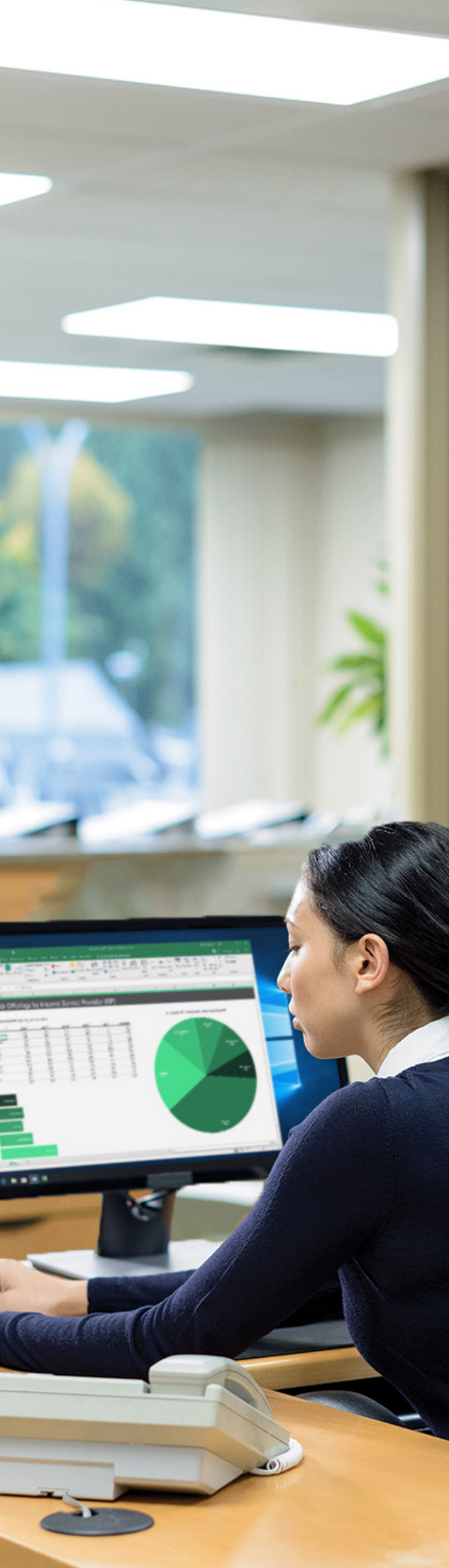
This digital revolution gives governments at all levels the ability to operate like agile startups: optimising operations, improving productivity, engaging citizens and reducing spending.

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) was left helpless when sudden, uncharacteristic temperature fluctuations sheathed roads in two inches of ice for the rest of the winter. Although the department wanted to prevent such conditions from happening again, it would be too costly to pre-emptively salt and sand the roads or send out snowploughs before each potential storm. Now the department collects hyperlocal data from a network of roadside telemetry stations and weather-tracking sensors on maintenance vehicles. This data is sent through Microsoft Azure, which allows ADOT&PF to forecast conditions more precisely and deploy resources in a cost-effective way.[1]

Improving the citizen experience through digital government

Improving touchpoints between citizens and government doesn't have to overburden staff or stretch budgets. Instead, breaking down information silos and centralising data can minimise manual tasks and give people the freedom to access services when and how they want.

The City of Grand Rapids, Michigan, used the built-in customer relationship management (CRM) processes and analysis tools of Microsoft Dynamics 365 to create a single point of contact for non-emergency services, known as Grand Rapids 311. Now its citizens can access information across public utilities departments with one call or visit to the website. No more long hold times or redundant administrative tasks – and all with $1 million of savings in the first 18 months.[2]

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In São Paulo, Brazil – South America's most populous city – the State Court of Justice underwent a dramatic digital transformation. With the help of Microsoft Digital Advisory Services, the city phased out its paper-based system, trained 50,000 employees, adopted new governance policies and made it possible for citizens to access simple court services from home.

Registering information now takes two minutes, down from an average of 21. Judges have increased their productivity by 50%, accessing information remotely to make informed decisions much faster. And, most importantly, the processing of new cases has accelerated by 87%.[3]

Citizen engagement can also improve the responsiveness of government agencies. In Los Angeles, California, Microsoft cloud technology lets citizens report hazards to the bureau of sanitation and track their resolution. Crews in the field use tablets to receive work instructions, rerouting to nearby requests and reporting their progress in real time. Sharing and updating this information on-site allows field workers to address issues quickly and improve the daily quality of life for citizens.[4]

Using Microsoft cloud solutions, governments are already achieving optimised operations that benefit both citizens and employees. Faster resolutions, real-time updates and enhanced productivity are all possible with scalable, omnichannel technology solutions.

Supporting government workers in the field

While self-serve digital experiences can reduce the burden on government employees, they can also support and empower skilled workers who need to be out in the community. Mobile collaboration tools and secure data access allow them to be more productive while working with citizens.

In the Netherlands, nonprofit social services organisation Wijkracht needed a modern IT environment that allowed its team to be with clients. The nonprofit chose a cloud infrastructure based on Microsoft 365. With tools like instant messaging, file sharing and mobile application access, the team can work directly in the community and deliver faster social services while protecting client data.[5]

The Richland, Washington, Police Department improved its information flow using cloud-based Office 365 so that officers could spend less time on paperwork and more time out in the community. Mobile-friendly collaboration and productivity tools allow department staff to access real-time information and file reports from the field. Smarter community safety strategies are already making officers more available to citizens and having a positive impact on the community.[6]

Being able to collaborate and automate case management empowers government employees who require a flexible work style. Mobile productivity through Microsoft cloud products allows them to perform these tasks virtually anywhere without sacrificing security, resulting in higher-quality, cost-efficient citizen services.

The engine of citizen services

Legacy systems and infrastructure create limitations that affect the efficiency of citizen services, whether at scale or face to face. Microsoft cloud technologies give agencies the flexibility to use public, private or hybrid cloud solutions in addition to open-source applications. This flexibility is what allows governments to find the most cost-effective technologies for their unique services and challenges.

The County of San Diego Office of Emergency Services had a website to share information with residents during wildfires, earthquakes, floods and other crises. But when the 2007 wildfire season overloaded the website with 12,000 visitors per hour, the agency quickly realised the need for a better web- hosting solution.[7]

Using Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Azure, the Office of Emergency Services created a new emergency portal optimised for accessibility, Spanish-speaking residents and use on mobile devices. Now, information is shared and received more efficiently: The simplicity of the Dynamics 365 interface allows non-technical staff to update the portal quickly, and a new notification system, AlertSanDiego, sends notifications directly to over 2 million phone numbers. And by choosing a cloud-based solution over on-premises servers, the Office of Emergency Services reduced its costs by 78%.

Modernising inefficient systems with adaptable cloud technology gives governments the opportunity to improve the way services are provided by employees and to citizens. The impact of these transformations can be measured not only in efficiency and productivity, but also in the time freed up for more meaningful work.

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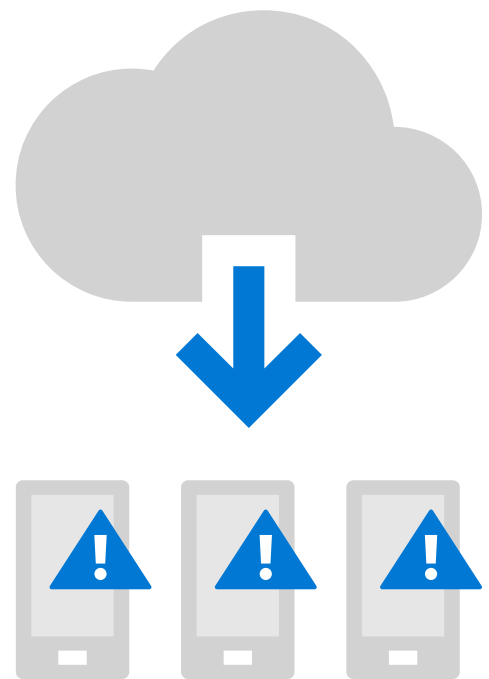
With our enhanced portal solution, a much broader community can directly access critical information wherever those residents may be, no matter their access or needs.

—

Robert Barreras

Senior Emergency Services Coordinator,
County of San Diego Office of Emergency Services

Securing citizen data

Security and compliance are always important considerations when working with citizen data. Legislation and regulations governing the management of this data can be complex and can often vary by geography and jurisdiction. Fortunately, Microsoft's expansive compliance certifications and accreditations help governments meet relevant regulations for their agencies.

As a cloud provider serving millions of customers around the world, Microsoft's cybersecurity solutions scale to meet the requirements of both large and small government organisations. Paired with the help of skilled experts and resources, technology is helping governments strike the right balance of security and end-user empowerment. And after four decades of working in the public sector, Microsoft understands the challenges of creating trustworthy digital government services in an increasingly mobile, cloud-first world.

"Richland PD considered several conferencing products and analytics tools, but of those, [Microsoft 365] was the only solution that complied with Criminal Justice Information Services requirements."

– Tony Striefel, Lieutenant CCIP, Professional Standards and Technology Division, Richland Police Department

Take citizen services to a new level with Microsoft

Flexibility, integration, trustworthiness and a citizen-centric approach all provide strong foundations for Microsoft to partner with governments on their roads to digital transformation. Government agencies of all kinds and sizes can achieve more for the institutions, businesses and citizens they serve with technology that brings new possibilities to life.

Achieve more for the citizens you serve with tools that allow governments to reimagine how they deliver essential services. The Microsoft focus on smart, cloud-based solutions can help empower workers and citizens to build stronger communities together.

→ **Learn more about Microsoft in Government**

Ready to get started? Call 1-800-426-9400.

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