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How to Improve Digital Service Delivery for Citizens and Employees

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PART I: THE PROBLEM

>> Introduction – Context

In many seen and unseen ways, the world is constantly changing. The pandemic that we are all still living through is just the latest in a series of tumultuous global events that began following the end of the Second World War, including the digital revolution. Now, decades later, digital transformations are still taking place in almost every industry at significant pace, with the pandemic often acting as a catalyst for even greater and faster change. While the private sector often leads the charge towards a new age, no industry can afford to be left behind, including the public sector.

Consumers the world over expect their government agencies to keep up with the technologies, applications and processes that they have become so accustomed to in other settings. Whilst the public sector often lags behind, the pandemic has somewhat turned this on its head. Some agencies are becoming digital out of necessity, with the QR codes that have become so popular with government agencies now being embraced by the private sector too. As a result, all customers and employees now have an expectation of digital service excellence that is far beyond the expectations of just a few years ago. In fact, some agencies and industries are now more focused on the speed of the transformation than on the service delivery. If the pandemic and specifically the vaccine rollouts have taught us anything, it is that until the weakest and poorest of us are looked after, we are all still vulnerable. Now is the time to continue the momentum that was started as a result of the pandemic, and to ensure that superior digital services are delivered to everyone.



>> A changed perception of government

As technology started to infiltrate our lives since the 1990s, people have started to lose faith in their governments' ability to provide services. In Australia, an independent review of the Australian Public Service (APS) published in 2019 – before the pandemic hit – revealed that “only 3 in 10 Australians trust government services,” and that the APS “is not changing fast enough to deliver for Australians in a changing world.”¹ In fact, the report refers to this phenomenon as a ‘crisis of trust’ and suggests that in 2018, “fewer than 41% of Australian citizens were satisfied with the way democracy works in Australia,” whilst close to 80% of the world’s democracies were distrusted by a majority of their citizens.²

Yet, when the pandemic began, out of necessity, governments led the way and the people came along with them. In NSW for instance, in March 2021 the Minister for Customer Service, The Hon Victor Dominello MP, said at a public forum³ that innovation within government services has to be underpinned by a foundation of trust. If trust exists or can be demonstrated then new products or services can be introduced. Thus when the pandemic began, Service

¹ ‘Our Public Service Our Future’ 2019, p21, <https://pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/independent-review-aps.pdf>

² Ibid, p46

³ At ‘Innovate NSW 2021’, organised by Public Sector Network

>> *The changing nature of consumer expectations*

Part of the reason why the public has come on the journey with the government and why government services such as QR codes and check-ins have become ubiquitous and accepted is because of consumer expectations. The proliferation of devices such as smart phones, apps, websites and the digital technology that was created to support it has become truly astounding. People now expect all their services – private and government – to be conducted in the same way. And they expect the government to keep up. After all, why should the ease of online banking and online shopping be any different to obtaining government services and supports online?⁵ In fact, the pandemic has only increased those expectations, with the public now demanding the same standards, more than ever before⁶.

On this very point, in May 2021, Australia’s Minister for the Digital Economy, Senator the Hon Jane Hume, said “twenty years ago you might have looked in the phone book to find a plumber, now we turn to Google and comparison services – we get quotes within the same day and pay software-generated invoices on our mobiles. Think about how much time and administration work that saves. Australians rightly expect the government to keep up with them, and to help chart the next step forward.”⁷ Australians expect this so much that prior to the pandemic they had some of the world’s highest consumer expectations,⁸ and this is only increasing as a result of recent world events.

Shannon Pigram, the Head of Culture & Capability at the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority in Victoria, refers to the changing customer expectations with an analogy of ordering a pizza. “These days we order our pizzas on our phones, pay for our pizza using internet banking or a digital credit card, watch the pizza get delivered and the only physical interaction is when we grab it from our front door.” This of course makes things more convenient but because it has become so common and expected, it also places potentially unrealistic expectations on the shoulders of all agencies, and is the reason why some agencies need to digitally transform more than others.

⁴ <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/performance-dashboard>

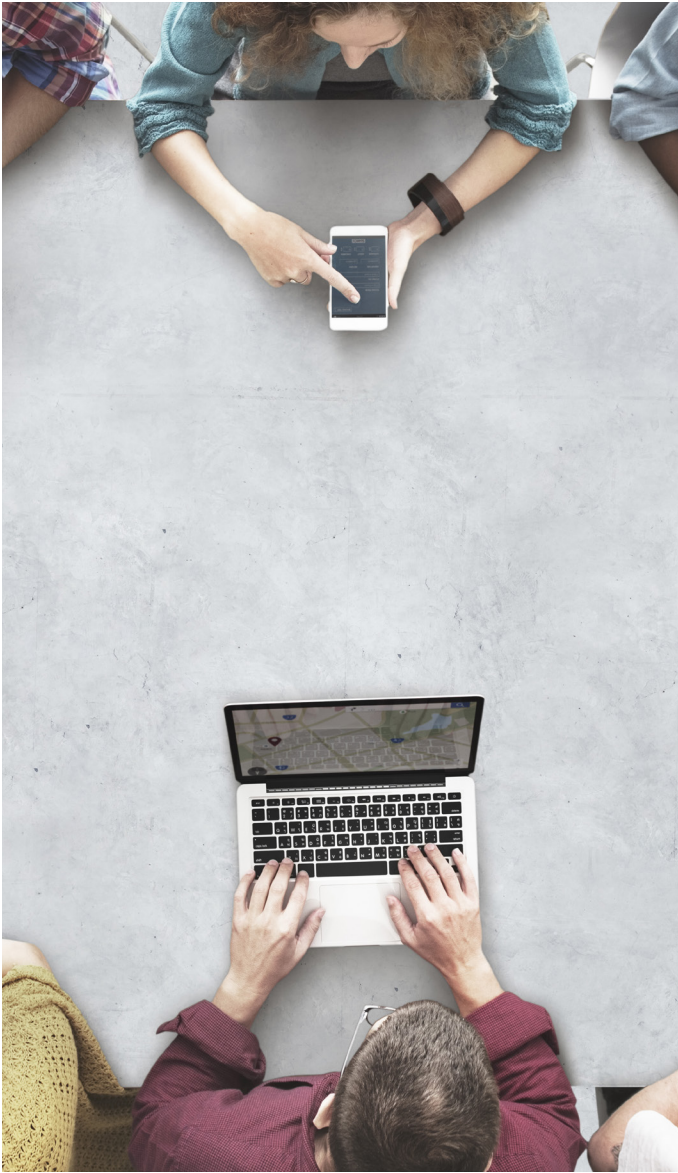
⁵ <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/digital-public-services-how-to-achieve-fast-transformation-at-scale>

⁶ https://www.ey.com/en_au/government-public-sector/how-can-clever-governments-choose-to-close-the-digital-divide

⁷ <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/modern-digital-economy-secure-australias-future>

⁸ <https://which-50.com/australians-have-the-highest-experience-expectations-concerned-about-privacy-and-automation-adobe-study/>

NSW – the agency charged with leading the response – started to show they can be trusted and owned up to any mistakes, making them vulnerable and willing to learn. That vulnerability is important because according to the Minister, “every time that we issue a government service digitally, it’s effectively like a micro election because we’re asking people if they like this service.” And in NSW, the majority of the population was very receptive to the products the government launched. Service NSW was the first agency in the country to set up a state-wide QR check-in code for COVID-19 contact tracing, which in March 2021 had been downloaded by more than “4.42 million people with 157.81 million check-ins.” This is now up over five million downloads and significantly more check-ins, though remarkably, the customer satisfaction rate has consistently hovered at around 94%, and remains so.⁴ This is an example from just one Australian state, but it is typical across the board since the start of the pandemic, and considering how distrusted government services were just two years earlier, it is truly an astonishing turnaround.



>> *The changing expectations of employees*

From an employee perspective, this changing nature of expectations affects staff too. After all, employees within public sector agencies are also consumers of services, and increasingly expect their places of employment to be as efficient as other services, especially now that many workplaces have become hybrid. But for the most part, public sector agencies – unlike their private sector counterparts – are not wired for efficiency or cost savings. A 2019 article by the Institute for Public Affairs suggests that red tape is costing Australia \$176 billion a year, with the excessive regulation of government harming the economy.⁹ This has changed slightly because of the pandemic, but government bureaucracy still means that it can be difficult for employees to be heard or listened to when there are so many policies, procedures and metaphoric hoops to jump through.

Despite this or maybe because of it, the pandemic has exposed a fault line that may or may not have been previously lurking in the background. Negotiating a work-life balance was talked up as being important in the past, but never has it been more important than since the start of the pandemic, with so many employees working at home and at all times of the day. A MetLife Australia study in 2020 found that 62% of employers agreed that the increasing demands for work-life flexibility was a challenge for their organisation.¹⁰ The mental health and well-being of staff have therefore become primary concerns for most workplaces, and for many employers, finding innovative ways to deal with these issues has become a priority.

These factors are important now and will continue to be. A survey conducted by Deloitte found that for 98% of CEOs, mental health and well-being will continue to be a CEO priority even after the current pandemic is a distant memory.¹¹ Moreover, they are so important that a report from 2021 found that 69% percent of Australian respondents would be willing to turn down a promotion if it meant preserving their mental health.¹² This seems quite surprising but is maybe the case largely due to the fact that most staff reported that they were

⁹ <https://ipa.org.au/publications-ipa/red-tape-is-costing-australia-176b-a-year>

¹⁰ <https://www.metlife.com.au/blog/blog-home/business/Employees-expectations-of-flexible-working-arrangements-is-changing/>

¹¹ <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/about-deloitte/us-ceo-survey-overview-winter-2021.pdf>

¹² <https://3klhkl1ibq34qk6sp3bhtox1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/atlassian-2021-return-on-action-report-australia.pdf>

“

Our focus has been on reducing the stigma of mental health in our workplace... We very much recognise that well-being is a personal responsibility, but as an organisation we also recognise that leaders have a role in creating an environment that enables healthy well-being.

Leanne Perryman,
Manager, People & Culture,
Surf Coast Shire (Victoria)



satisfied with the way their employers were looking after them, and giving them the space and resources to thrive in their current set ups, including the flexibility to work in their own time and around their personal commitments. In many ways, this is the crux of the matter: for most employees, as long as they have access to the internet, online collaboration tools, a comfortable chair and a table at home and the time to do their work when it suits them, they are happy to sacrifice almost all other work-related perks, including a potential promotion.¹³ The problem however is that not everyone has access to reliable internet and appropriate collaboration tools, so some employees are therefore spending part of their work time engaged in ensuring their tools are up to scratch, rather than focussing on their actual work, which in turn affects their morale and mental health.

On top of that, after the pandemic began, most companies had to pivot almost overnight to set up their new infrastructure remotely and just to keep things going. In some cases, it brought about months or years of change in a very short period,¹⁴ causing some chaos. Then with city-wide lockdowns and time away from the office becoming commonplace, for any company or agency that was able to recruit and expand, on-boarding new staff without access to the requisite hardware or an office environment was also very tricky. In other words, the employee experience suffered. This is backed up by a global report by LinkedIn from early 2020, which found that almost 96% of talent leaders said that improving the employee experience, with all that entails, was becoming an increasingly important way for organisations to improve their profitability and retain good talent.¹⁵



>> *What is digital transformation and why is it needed?*

Industries need to ensure that the expectations of their consumers and employees are being met, and while computers and the internet have been part of the way offices operate for years, according to an internationally recognised definition by the OECD, digital transformation specifically “refers to a process of adoption of digital tools and methods by an organisation, particularly those that have not kept up with the pace of change in digital technologies.”¹⁶ For many organisations, this process of digitisation is “viewed as a new source of growth, efficiency or relevance in an increasingly digital world.”¹⁷ In fact, digitisation is not just the way of the future but the pathway of the present, as Senator Hume notes when she says that “so many Australians are already participating in the digital economy, some without

¹³ https://www.europeanbusinessreview.com/how-digital-transformation-is-changing-employee-expectations/?_cf_chl_f_tk=AvsISbxCSWd2aEX6yJVXHOzWb9mf42yJi4cklfrsYs-1642556613-0-gaNycGzNCOU

¹⁴ <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/how-covid-19-has-pushed-companies-over-the-technology-tipping-point-and-transformed-business-forever>

¹⁵ <https://news.linkedin.com/2020/january/linkedin-reveals-four-trends-reshaping-how-companies-hire-and-re>

¹⁶ <https://oecd-opsi.org/guide/digital-transformation/>

¹⁷ *ibid*

even realising it. Every contactless purchase, e-Invoice, business website or small business going online – it’s all part of it, and it’s growing rapidly.”¹⁸

Both the public and private sectors realise that improved digital transformation is likely to have positive outcomes for their customers. For instance, the contactless purchases that the Minister refers to makes back-end tracking more efficient, since everything is digital and easier to monitor, but also makes life more convenient for the customer. Yet a Deloitte report from 2015 based on surveys, found that “only 27% of Australian agencies feel confident about their organisation’s readiness to respond to digital trends.”¹⁹ The same report found that in Australia in particular, the main driver for digital transformation was “citizen demand,” but that there were three main barriers to change, including “insufficient funding, too many competing priorities and a lack of an overall strategy.”²⁰ In many ways, little has changed in the intervening years. A national survey conducted by the Public Sector Network²¹ in March and April 2021 as part of a digital government and citizen experience roadshow, with delegates from across all tiers of government, found that half of the respondents (n = 116) cited a lack of enterprise-wide buy-in and collaboration as the top challenge, whilst 27% of respondents said that the availability of resources was their second challenge, as depicted in Figure 1.

DIGITAL GOVERNMENT & CITIZEN EXPERIENCE ROADSHOW SURVEY 2021

116 ATTENDEES PARTICIPATED IN THIS SURVEY

What is the top challenge you face in your digital transformation efforts?

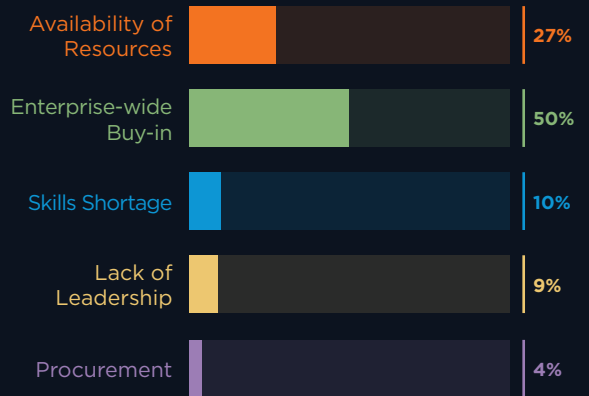


Figure 1: Digital Government Survey

¹⁸ <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/modern-digital-economy-secure-australias-future>

¹⁹ Digital Government Transformation, Deloitte, October 2015, <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/>

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ <https://publicsectornetwork.co/>





>> Drivers for digital transformation

Whilst the barriers to digital transformation, especially in the public sector, have hardly changed in the last number of years, the drivers for transformation have changed quite significantly, especially since the onset of the pandemic. As always, the number one driving factor remains customer or citizen demand, but now there are other anecdotal factors too. They include:

- **Connectedness of citizens and a demand for improved services**
- **Agility of operations**
- **The push for greater transparency of information and higher security**
- **Innovative and technology savvy workplaces**
- **Changing policies and compliance needs**
- **Greater focus on the employee experience**
- **Increasing security threats around data and network sabotage**
- **The COVID-19 pandemic**

Though the pandemic is listed separately, many of these factors have been exacerbated as a result of COVID-19. The push for greater transparency, the agility of operations and increasing security threats have been heightened since many employees started working from home, while changing policies and innovative workplaces have also come into sharper focus in the last two years. Though no-one could have predicted a global pandemic, many of these drivers were well known for people working within government and other agencies.

The drivers and justifications for transformation have been well established for a long time, and although some of the barriers still exist, both the public and private sectors need to find ways to overcome them in order to remain competitive. Yet despite all that, rapid change is still very difficult for most businesses and agencies. They are not conditioned for it and generally don't know how to "adapt quickly" or "deploy at scale."²²

“

We started our digital transformation journey in 2018 but when we did so, it felt like we were stepping back into the 1990s. It was clear we needed to change and that some kind of disruption was coming. We didn't know it would come in the form of a pandemic, but we knew that something was coming. So we decided we needed to be on the front foot rather than being left behind.

Jeffrey Griffith,
Deputy General Manager,
Devonport City Council (Tasmania)

²² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2021/06/02/managing-customer-expectations-in-a-changing-digital-landscape/?sh=17a4f6406dda>

>> *Failure can be avoided*

For many organisations, though it is clear and obvious that they need to change, they often struggle to know where or how to start, and since they know things often take a long time to implement, they often avoid things that they know will cause disruptions for long periods. However, if they are clear on the reasons for the change and are committed to it, then that is the first step towards success. For most organisations though, it is not simply a matter of throwing out or upgrading the current system. A lot more planning and thinking is required. Surprisingly, up to 70% of digital transformations fail the first time due to lack of planning and forethought, though they often succeed on a subsequent attempt because the people involved were able to learn from their mistakes.²³

One of the common reasons for failure is that organisations often do transformation for transformation's sake because they know that others are doing it too, or they simply do what is easiest or cheapest (ie: lowest hanging fruit) rather than looking at their customer needs and consumer expectations.²⁴ In the process, they often also don't plan the change process thoroughly and thus consumers experience unintentional pain points that could have easily been planned for and avoided.

>> *The impact of the pandemic*

Though planning is necessary, the pandemic has shown that transformation can come quickly and in very appropriate ways when there is a catalyst or an external global factor. In general, people and companies know what to do but need the motivation of an outside force to actually get it done. As part of that, in 2021 the Australian government released its data strategy as well as numerous allocations in the budget in order to set up the country towards 2030 with a “clear vision for maximising data-driven innovation across the economy.”²⁵ The agency largely responsible for developing and implementing the strategy is the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA), and Michelle Graham, the Assistant Secretary, says that the legwork for the strategy was done before the pandemic hit, but was then intensified in the second half of 2020.

This attitude within the public sector allowed the NSW government to create QR codes and apps, and has allowed other agencies to also lead the way when it comes to transformations and implementations. In some sectors, it has even spurred agencies to transform in a way they never thought possible. For instance, Michelle Webster, the General Manager of Customer and Commercial Services at Central Highlands Regional Council in Queensland, says “COVID-19 has really provided a really good opportunity for us as an organisation to make changes, rather than being stuck in our old ways.”

“

If COVID-19 has taught us one thing, it is that we can change and adapt overnight if we need to. COVID-19 has really taught us that government can switch overnight if required, so we can adapt and interpret what has always been done.”

Michelle Graham,
Assistant Secretary,
Digital Transformation Agency (Australia)

²³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/blakemorgan/2019/09/30/companies-that-failed-at-digital-transformation-and-what-we-can-learn-from-them/?sh=210fed0603c4>

²⁴ <https://www.bcg.com/en-au/publications/2017/four-ways-improve-digital-customer-service>

²⁵ <https://digitaleconomy.pmc.gov.au/fact-sheets/data-and-digital-economy>

Ultimately it is all of course about the changing nature of consumer expectations, and a McKinsey & Co article early on in the pandemic concluded by saying that “customer experience has taken on a new definition and dimension in the overwhelming challenge of COVID-19. Customer leaders who care and innovate during this crisis and anticipate how customers will change their habits will build stronger relationships that will endure well beyond the crisis’s passing.”²⁶ It is also true that smart investments in the digital transformation of the public sector will have massive implications, with the “enormous potential to improve social well-being by driving long-term economic growth, accelerating global sustainability efforts and addressing long-term systemic challenges. In addressing the challenges brought about by the pandemic, the digital transformation of public services has the potential to significantly improve societal well-being through more efficient, secure, responsive and human-centric services, as well as being a driver for economic growth.”²⁷

²⁶ <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/adapting-customer-experience-in-the-time-of-coronavirus>

²⁷ <https://www.delltechnologies.com/en-us/blog/unlocking-the-digital-transformation-of-public-sector-and-services/>



A young woman with blonde hair and glasses is smiling and looking to her right. She is holding a tablet computer with both hands. She is wearing a white V-neck blouse and a dark pleated skirt. In the background, there are blurred figures of other people, suggesting a classroom or office environment. The overall image has a dark, semi-transparent overlay.

PART II: THE SOLUTION

>> *A new way of thinking*

The ultimate goal of any institution is to provide the best possible goods or services in a customer-centric manner, and to do so in a way that is efficient and looks after its staff, thereby being cost-effective. Introducing new systems or upgrading existing systems, especially ones that have a long-standing legacy and are complex, will by their nature be disruptive, time-consuming and expensive. Therefore any transition process must be carefully thought through, well planned and properly communicated to both the clients and staff. Transformations also need to be embraced by the leadership and ideally, should have institutional support from across the sector. In Australia it is very common for agencies across all states to be hesitant to share information with each other, and sometimes even within their own agencies. In fact, privacy and security was seen as one of the main barriers to change, along with policy bottlenecks, bureaucratic inertia, capability constraints, and a number of other factors, according to a Deloitte study on digital government transformation in Australia in 2015.²⁸ Australia in general has the skills and technology to be a digital nation, but for it to be successful, it needs decisive political leadership and encouragement from all sectors.

Generally there is little information sharing between or across governments or agencies, but the crisis of the pandemic has shown to the political class as well as to the public that governments can work in a bi-partisan and even collegial manner when there is an existential threat.²⁹ The problem for digital transformation is that it is not seen as an issue that requires the same form of enlightened leadership as a pandemic response, despite the financial investments and strategies discussed earlier. This is despite the fact that according to the Australian Local Government CEO Index 2021, digital transformation was seen as the highest-ranking priority across that sector nationally,³⁰ and likely a high rating priority in other sectors too. On top of that, there are great gaps in the knowledge base of employees as well as the public depending on where you look, and there is also a digital divide, meaning some agencies and institutions are significantly better equipped and prepared for digitisation than others. Plus, in some sectors, unless there is a catalyst or a genuine reason to work rapidly – like a global pandemic – most things progress at a glacial pace. In order to overcome this, especially in the age of COVID-19, government agencies need to come together, share information in more transparent ways, and work towards closing the gap between the digitally connected and the unconnected, and ensuring that everyone has access to the same digital platforms and opportunities.³¹



²⁸ <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/Economics/deloitte-au-economics-digital-government-transformation-230715.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/williamhaseltine/2021/03/24/what-can-we-learn-from-australias-covid-19-response/?sh=7de2ac4a3a01>

³⁰ <https://irp.cdn-website.com/fa267adc/files/uploaded/DWPCEOInd21.pdf>

³¹ https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/csi-covid_factsheet_digitalinclusion.pdf

>> *Leveraging transformations within the local government*

One of the sectors where progress can be slow is in the field of local government Transformations of any great magnitude are rare and partly because of that, when they occur, they are not just about plugging a gap but are usually about looking to the future as well. Shane Hackett, the Manager of Customer Services at Brisbane City Council in Queensland, says that when they started their transition journey in 2015, it was about improving customer engagement as well as improving their technology. For instance, “we had a very manual process. As recently as five or six years ago we were going through the phone book and calling 1,200 people randomly each year and asking them what they thought of us.” Recently the technology was upgraded with “computer programs to understand the key drivers of satisfaction for our customers.” They now use “algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI), looking at patterns to analyse data, which takes the human processing part out of it.” By late 2020 that meant they could analyse feedback from 33,000 customers, and it left the “humans to actually action those insights.” They are now looking to leverage QR codes.

At the same time, David Kerr, the Director of Community and Belonging at Northern Beaches Council in Sydney, warns that “experience outcomes should drive the change, not the digital platform.” Often within local government, the tendency is wait to implement something until it is absolutely clear that it will work and it is appropriate for the region. Within councils, people also tend to make assumptions which aren’t always accurate.

In Tasmania, Jeffrey Griffith, the Deputy General Manager at Devonport City Council, says that to improve the customer service of the council, “we needed to make the customer experience frictionless and take the unnecessary contact out of the journey, and we needed to have an unrelenting focus on continuous improvement by embracing digital transformation.” As part of that, since 2018 “there have been more than 40 discrete digital transformation initiatives.” This has included the digitisation of 90 electronic forms, the adoption of a “cloud first and mobility first approach” which has allowed staff to “transact with the community anytime, anywhere and from any device.” This allowed them to continue working remotely when the pandemic hit “as if there was no impact.” Overall, it was all about making the experience better for customers.

“

The community use and acceptance of QR codes as a result of COVID-19 has just gone through the roof, and we’re looking to capitalise on that. If we get it right then we won’t just think about what the customers are saying; we’ll know what the customers are actually saying.

Shane Hackett,
Manager, Customer Services,
Brisbane City Council

“

We tend to be very risk-averse in local government and afraid of failure. We need to be prepared to try something different and not be afraid of not getting it right the first time.

David Kerr,
Director, Community and Belonging,
Northern Beaches Council (NSW)

“

What is absolutely critical is that you recognise that your organisation runs on people, processes and systems. You have to get the processes and systems right to better enable the people to deliver good quality customer service. When all of these things come together then you can help your council deliver a better quality experience and improved customer service to the community.”

Jeffrey Griffith,
Deputy General Manager,
Devonport City Council

>> *Bringing it altogether – A fresh approach*

One way to achieve this is through the use of specifically designed solutions and services. Over the last decade in particular there has been a proliferation of such products and services emanating from companies situated in most corners of the world – such is the demand and universal appeal. One such company is Freshworks, a NASDAQ-listed firm founded in 2010, focussed on consumers and employees. In fact, their fresh approach which sets them apart, is their emphasis on “building and delivering software-as-a-service (SaaS) that’s affordable, quick to implement, and designed for the end-user.”³² As part of this approach, they have multiple cloud-based products, each of which is designed to assist consumers and employees, and each of which is designed to be scalable and adaptable. As such, for any agency or organisation that had implemented a Freshworks solution prior to the pandemic, transitioning to remote work was a much easier experience.

In the public sector, the majority of clients to date have been local councils or state government agencies. Many of them appreciate the custom dashboards and the ability of Freshservice IT service management (ITSM) products to minimise duplication and provide consistency, as well a solution like Freshdesk, which brings all customer communications onto one platform and thus assists in providing a consistent, seamless experience to citizens. The data capabilities offered by such a solution and the ability of the Freshworks platform to integrate with other applications, also allows them to connect with citizens in unique ways.

>> *Case Study – a deep dive into a Freshworks success story*

As we’ve seen, local councils rarely tend to upgrade their systems and often have legacy platforms that are not always as useful in modern days as they once were. One such council in South Australia in 2018 realised that they had platforms dating back to 2000. It was clearly time to upgrade, but as always, transitions are often seen as overwhelming and daunting. So rather than go at it alone, they realised that the key to ensuring that they got the products they wanted was through collaboration. So two neighbouring councils north of Adelaide, and a third council slightly to the south, came together in the hope of creating a collaborative, functional and easy-to-use IT platform that would be able to serve both their customers and their internal staff.

The Cities of Charles Sturt, Marion and Port Adelaide Enfield decided that the best way to achieve their shared goals was to implement Freshservice, described as “a leading service desk software.” This has enabled the three councils to “streamline internal operations and deliver an engaging and award-winning employee experience.”³³ Karin Swiatnik from the City of Charles Sturt, who is also the President of Local Government Information Technology South Australia, says that the “collaboration between the councils helped build a strong local network and the benefits seen aren’t just in the dollar value of savings, but also in the sharing of knowledge and skill sets across the councils, helping to create stronger communities across the board.” Nonetheless, from a savings perspective, “the councils saw a reduction in IT requests, which translated into a 10% decrease in phone calls because employees were able to easily find a resolution without having to contact the team and, in total, over 1,500 IT assets have been migrated – results that have changed the way we work.”³⁴

Wayne Prideaux, the Team Leader IT Operations at the City of Port Adelaide Enfield, says that they didn’t want the new platform to be the same as the old one, but “we did want to keep the rich statistical data within it. So we had to decide what elements of that data we value and how to align it with Freshservice’s configurations.” This resulted in the successful migration of not just 1,500 IT assets, but “approximately 46,600 tickets and 1,200 paths

³² <https://www.freshworks.com/company/about/>

³³ <https://fst.net.au/industry-insights/whos-who/karin-swiatnik-lqitsa-president-city-of-charles-sturt/>

³⁴ https://www.governmentnews.com.au/type_contributors/digitally-transforming-australias-public-sector-relies-on-collaboration/

and customer details as well.” Matt Kovarik, the Senior IT Project Officer at the City of Marion agrees, and says that “having all three councils on Freshservice helped us generate massive savings, not just in licensing and procurement costs, but also in terms of renewals.” Moreover, all three councils agreed that the support and service they received from Freshworks was impressive, as was the collaborative nature of the project. In part, this is likely one of the reasons why the ‘Collaborative Service Desk’ project won the 2021 MAV Technology Award in the category of Collaboration or Partnership Achievement of the Year.³⁵

³⁵ <https://www.mavdigital.com/portfolio/awards-for-excellence/>

“

This project collaboration has helped us build a very strong network with each other, which will come in useful for the other projects we have in the pipeline. The benefits that we’ve seen aren’t just in the dollar value of savings, but also in the sharing of knowledge and skill sets across the councils. All of us agree that it was an amazing success.

Janice Delaney,
Senior Business Analyst,
City of Charles Sturt (SA)



The ability to collaborate and work together has always been a priority of Freshworks products, whilst having all the information in one place has also been a major benefit. In New Zealand, Lisa McGrath, a Project Manager at Wellington City Council, says that for them, the benefit of having Freshworks solutions is that it has enhanced their “workflow automation, and we’ve been able to build custom forms which gives us a lot more information upfront, helping us to understand issues or fulfil our service requests a lot quicker.” They have also benefited from the self-service portal, where their staff and customers can submit a ticket themselves, and this makes their operations more productive. Freshworks has also allowed them to retire some of their old applications whilst integrating new ones with other critical data, thus reducing duplication and creating “a single source of truth.” On top of that, the very adaptive user interface allowed the solutions and services to be delivered remotely during the start of the pandemic. “Freshservice being a SaaS and online product meant that it was quite an easy transition for us. We switched to working remotely really quickly and were actually about to communicate a lot quicker with our stakeholders.”

In Victoria, Daniel Lewis, the General Manager of Digital Operations at Casey Cardinia Libraries, a council-run public library service operating in seven physical locations and at one mobile service, says that they use Freshdesk messaging “to connect our members and patrons through the website to our information services.” This includes connecting specialist librarians with expert knowledge to “communities to help them navigate the complexities of what they are looking for.” On top of that, they use other Freshworks products in their marketing and finance teams, and for their internal ticketing. For them too, Freshworks products are about “bringing everything together into one spot.”

>> Conclusion – How Freshworks can help

Terms like ‘new normal’ and ‘building back better’ have entered the lexicon of society to describe a time when the pandemic finally disappears or moves to the background of everyone’s thinking. Leveraging the lessons of the pandemic – including collaboration, rapid decision-making, and hybrid workplaces – will ensure that the hardships have not been for naught. After all, ‘necessity is the mother of all inventions,’ but within the public sector, bureaucrats are often stymied by process. Digital transformation is something that needs to take a holistic, focussed approach so that it includes not just the technology side, but also processes, people, policies, and relationships.³⁶ Sometimes agencies and the people within them can achieve more than they think is possible for the long-term benefit of the people they serve if they think and act in innovative and different ways.

Freshworks brings that fresh and innovative approach to customer service, customer relationships and enterprise service management. With over 50,000 satisfied customers in 145 countries, plus 13 global offices including one in Sydney and one in Melbourne, Freshworks has the solutions, services and know-how to enhance the consumer and employee experience, and thereby improving the experience for staff and the whole organisation. Freshworks works with organisations across all industries, including local government, state agencies and government departments. Some of Freshworks’ customers include the University of Sydney, Harvey Norman, F45, Booktopia and Randstad.

The Freshworks platform is designed to unify customer engagements, elevate employee experiences and be innovative to scale effortlessly. Whether you are about to begin your transformation journey, are in the midst of it or are exploring ways to further improve efficiencies, there is a Freshworks product or service that right for you. Contact the Australian team on +61 1800 861 302 or at: sales@freshworks.com

³⁶ <https://www.dta.gov.au/digital-transformation-strategy/digital-transformation-strategy-refresh>



About Freshworks

Freshworks makes it fast and easy for businesses to delight their customers and employees. We do this by taking a fresh approach to building and delivering software-as-a-service that’s affordable, quick to implement, and designed for the end-user. Unlike legacy software, Freshworks builds tech that works for everyone, making it easy for IT, customer service, sales, marketers and HR to do their job and delight their customers.

More than 50,000 companies use Freshworks’ SaaS to enable a better customer experience (CX, CRM) and employee experience (ITSM, HRSM).

For more information visit

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Public Sector Network is a research company that represents public sector professionals across Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the USA. It develops roundtables, seminars, and conferences to suit current areas of interest to government agencies and their suppliers.

PSN's growing community spans across federal, state, and local government departments, healthcare, and education, allowing members to share information, access the latest in government innovation, and engage with other like-minded individuals on a secure and closed-door network.

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