

Mapping the route to IT transformation

Agencies must be strategic about transforming IT while staying on top of daily operational needs



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AGENCIES HAVE long-standing IT environments that support broad-based, complex missions. So when it comes to IT transformation, they do not have the luxury of building a new infrastructure from the ground up — especially one that capitalizes on today's capabilities and protects against today's threats. Instead, they must keep their existing IT systems running so that they can remain open for business even as they seek to transform that environment.

Achieving the transformative goal of

full adoption of IT as a service requires planning and prioritization. Officials should start by identifying apps and services that best align with their mission-critical requirements. Then they need to create a one- to three-year strategic plan that transforms how they host the highest priority applications and workloads while adjusting the resources devoted to less critical IT.

Keeping cloud in perspective

Another part of the mapping process

involves conducting a thorough inventory of existing investments and how they align with the mission. Agencies need to know everything that's on their networks and quantify the technical debt represented by legacy IT. And then they need to develop a plan to eliminate underutilized software and less-than-optimal processes.

The ongoing nature of digital transformation requires a workload-by-workload analysis of how an agency is going to deliver capabilities to its end users. As they are making those decisions, agencies should avoid thinking of cloud technology as the destination when it's really just an operating model. Instead, they must take the time to understand the best way to handle each workload because a hosted cloud environment might not be the optimal choice. No single cloud solution is appropriate for all situations. In short, successful transformation relies on a keen understanding of a multi-cloud strategy.

IT strategic plans also require well-executed communication strategies through multiple channels to engage with employees and bring their activities in alignment with the agency's goals.

The need for a cyber culture change

Likewise, an agency cannot have a good cyber posture without changing the way employees understand and engage with technology. When an agency has priorities that take a lot of investment — in terms of downtime, user experience or a big proportion of the budget — officials must explain that IT transformation will reduce technical debt and increase the resources available to support initiatives that



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are most important to accomplishing the agency's mission.

As agencies are raising awareness and explaining priorities to their employees, they must also build their IT environments under a secure-by-design methodology. "Secure by design" means that on a 360-degree, multi-dimensional basis, agencies have repeatedly used development and testing environments to ensure that

they have pulled in all the capabilities available to them – whether it's classic signature-based antivirus software, tools that use algorithms to detect internal and external threats, or artificial intelligence and machine learning. The goal is for agencies to incorporate what they've learned during development and testing into the design of their IT-as-a-service capabilities and multi-year strategic plans.

Agencies' missions, the government's responsibilities and technology have become inseparable. Therefore, to achieve true transformation, agency leaders must bring together people, processes and technology in a harmonized way. ■

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