

INNOVATION IN GOVERNMENT

SERVING THE CITIZEN

2

The Agency
Transition
to Digital

4

The New Era
of Citizen
Engagement

6

Improve
Citizen
Experience

8

Using
Technology
to Better
Serve

10

Raise the Bar
on Customer
Service

12

Reinventing
Government
Collaboration

14

Create a
Constituent
Conversation

16

One-on-One
with
Martha
Dorris

Advances in digital services technology and the manner in which agencies are transitioning to digital are transforming how they serve their citizens.

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THE AGENCY TRANSITION TO DIGITAL: ROLL-OUT OR REVOLUTION?

Moving to a digital services culture is as much a philosophical shift as it is a technological transformation.

THE TRANSITION government agencies are making to delivering digital services is often referred to as a cultural experience—not a roll-out or upgrade. It's actually all of those things. But instituting digital services is more like a revolution, with all the passion and re-education that implies.

"We're not out to transform services just to have new services. We're really out to transform people's lives," said Aaron Snow, executive director of 18F, a fee-for-service government office that helps other agencies build, buy and share digital services. "And to transform the services that improve people's lives, we have to transform some entrenched practices." Snow spoke at the Citizen Engagement Summit: Delivering on the Promise of Digital Services, held March 2 in Washington, D.C.

However, transforming entrenched, legacy practices often takes deep institutional resources and leverage. Recognizing that, the GSA recently merged three of its technology groups, the 18F digital services agency, the Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies (OCSIT), and the Presidential Innovation Fellows program into a program called the Technology Transformation Service (TTS).

Federal CIO Tony Scott said the newly christened triad would "strengthen the way federal agencies develop, buy and share cutting edge digital solutions," according to a GSA announcement.

In a May 3 blog post, GSA administrator Denise Turner Roth called the new services organization, "a foundation for the federal government's digital transformation," and an opportunity to partner with other agencies and assist them in their own attempts to transform. "By moving these programs into a new service," she said, "we are demonstrating a commitment to make agile, user-centered delivery of technology the way we do business moving forward."

The effort will require money and manpower. In remarks made while introducing the fiscal 2017 federal budget, administration officials highlighted upcoming IT priorities, including "delivering smarter information technology, world-class customer service and stronger engagement with communities and citizens."

The administration also appears to be putting its money and resources where its mouth is. Next year, the administration plans to spend \$35 million more on the U.S. Digital Service (USDS), \$105 million for digital services teams at 25 agencies, and even more for digital channels throughout the federal government. Citing the need for more IT specialists to pursue its digital goals, the administration said it will also aim to hire 500 top "digital service experts" by January 2017 to work with agencies on their highest priority projects.

Those additional specialists would reinforce the U.S. Digital Service, a group of entrepreneurs assembled in 2014 to work on special projects. Since then, USDS experts have worked on several key projects, including restoring the State Department's global Consolidated Consular Database after a worldwide outage and laying the groundwork for secure access to all IRS digital services.

In preparing for the 2016 budget, the administration also released all budget data in machine-readable formats on GitHub, a web site for hosting open source projects. Altogether, the technical expertise initiatives have saved more than \$3.5 billion, according to administration officials.

Those savings have helped sustain the principles GSA has adopted during the course of the government's digital transition. Those principles include managing data instead of documents, using shared platforms to reduce costs, providing users with access to information anytime on multiple devices, and ensuring secure information delivery.

Using these guidelines, IT managers are developing digital systems they believe will help build strong technology cultures. Environmental Protection Agency CIO Ann Duncan, speaking at the Citizen Engagement Summit, said creating a digital services culture requires a radically different thought and decision-making processes. The EPA is turning to user-centered design, modular practices and agile development instead of sticking with familiar waterfall methods. Streamlining government processes also helps encourage an agency digital services culture, she said.

The mechanics of digital transformation also requires ideas and methods for measuring progress. The U.S. Census Bureau,

for example, does more than 100 continuous surveys each year by phone, online, mail and interviews. It also solicits feedback via satisfaction surveys, webinars, social media and call centers.

“We want to make sure the information was repeatable, significant, and that we had the right information,” said Lisa Wolfisch, Deputy Director for the Center for New Media and Promotion at the U.S. Census Bureau, who spoke at the Citizen Engagement Summit. “Technology isn’t always the

problem—it’s how we listen to our customers.”

The I8F’s Snow, who will serve as deputy commissioner of TTS, also acknowledged similar cultural changes ahead. “Cultural change happens when we trust in methodologies that work, when we reduce anxiety about the new and unknown, and when we serve up example after example that signal that this way is better, cheaper, faster, less risky,” he said. “That’s how we spur adoption and ultimately transformation.”

THE CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT



DIGITAL DESIGN

Digital services must be designed with the user in mind—which is to say, the design must be dynamic, tailored to the requirements of every touchpoint and every platform, and continually optimized.



DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

Many agencies have had the experience of developing new digital services only to struggle to reach the intended audience. The solution is a digital engagement platform that keeps you connected with your constituents and drives traffic to your resources.



CIVIC TECH

In developing digital services, it is essential to align the public-facing services with the core internal processes that support them. The digital services toolkit should include workflow automation, application programming interfaces and related tools.



CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

One reason to adopt a rigorous customer relationship discipline is that it will improve an agency’s reputation with the public. Another reason is that it can improve the efficiency and productivity of employees, freeing up resources to support the larger mission.



CONTENT SHARING

Information is the life stream of every government agency. To work effectively and collaboratively, employees need the ability to share content quickly and securely, no matter where they are or what platform they are using. Without that ability, innovation is a non-starter.



BLENDED COLLABORATION

In some cases, employees prefer asynchronous collaboration, so they can interact as time allows, while at other times they prefer a direct, synchronous approach. The best collaboration toolkit includes both options.

THE NEW ERA OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Citizens want services and communications that are mobile, personalized and optimized. Today's innovation makes it easier than ever to deliver.



BARRY LEFFEWE
VICE PRESIDENT,
PUBLIC SECTOR,
ADOBE SYSTEMS
INCORPORATED

TECHNOLOGY IS constantly evolving to improve the interaction between citizens and government, with a feedback loop that's faster, more mobile and more personalized than ever. We've moved beyond digitizing paper-based workflows. With today's technology agencies can now deliver better, and more effective citizen services at a much lower cost. It's a new era for Citizen Engagement. Taking advantage of it is easier and less expensive than you think using these four concepts.

Meet Citizens Where They Live.

Mobile isn't a touchpoint, it's the way we get things done. Citizens are more nomadic than ever, and their individual productivity has also increased. As a result, citizens demand to inform themselves wherever and whenever they want. They also expect to be more meaningfully productive in any environment. Today's government workflows must reach citizens wherever they are, in a manner that's lightweight, secure and simple to use.

Ideally, agencies should consider a mobile-first approach to their application and web content delivery. By designing responsive experiences within the context of the device, agencies can deliver the best user experiences to their citizens. But, shifting to a mobile-first approach doesn't necessarily mean changing out all of an agency's infrastructure. It's possible to extend legacy applications into new and more agile footprints.

Personalization Matters.

Many agencies understand the benefit of getting the right information to the right person at the right time. But what is less well-known is that the cost of service delivery drops in direct proportion to the targeting precision. Put another way, citizens want to get on and off an agency web site as quickly as they previously wanted to get in and out of an

agency office. The more an agency can personalize content delivery, the sooner citizens are connected with the information, forms and applications they want. The result? Faster and more efficient workflows, and fewer errors from manual, paper-intensive processes.

Measure, Optimize and Measure Again.

Measuring your effectiveness is important, but what you do with those measurements is the real game-changer. Statistics on visits, open rates or click-throughs don't mean much unless there is an integrated system that can take that data and based on the results, easily optimize the content delivery. And it has to be across all touchpoints—email, web, social—because citizens will naturally drift across channels. The measurement platform should be well integrated with the content management system so that it's easy to understand, for example, when an instructional video for a form works better on a desktop than it does on a smart phone.

Success is an Ongoing Journey.

The true measure of engagement rests in the eye of the citizen. And it's up to the agency to expand and grow their capabilities in response. There isn't an endpoint, citizen need will continue to evolve, and so the agency's response will continue to evolve. Advances in technology—such as Adobe Digital Design Templates for Government that help public sector web site managers build USDS/18F design guideline compliant web content—will in turn improve user experiences that field deeper relationships between agencies and citizens. This is why it's important to choose creative and engaging platforms that can grow with both the agency and the citizen.

Barry Leffew is the Vice President of Public Sector at Adobe Systems Incorporated.



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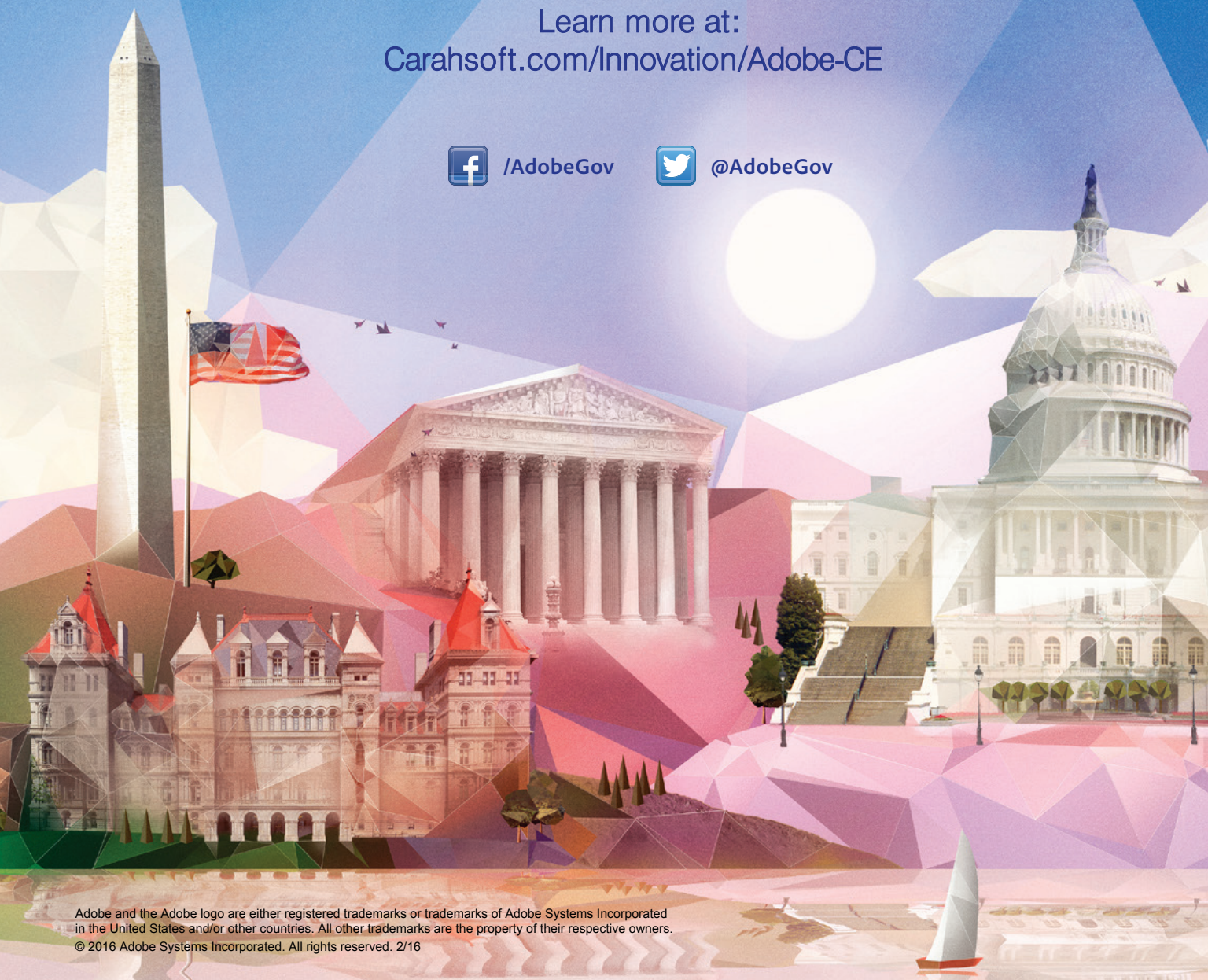
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EMBRACE DIGITAL TO IMPROVE CITIZEN EXPERIENCE

The manner in which consumers interact with commercial online businesses is changing their expectations of government services.



BOB AINSBURY
CHIEF OPERATING
OFFICER, GOVDELIVERY

TODAY'S DIGITAL CONSUMER

has high expectations for access to answers and information. In this world of Siri and Google, citizens expect to be able to access services

from government agencies the same way they access services from private sector companies like Uber.

According to the American Customer Satisfaction Index Federal Government Report, U.S. citizen satisfaction levels for the federal government are declining. They're actually lagging behind the commercial industry. Public sector satisfaction hovers around 64 percent, compared to roughly 80 percent in the private sector. Citizens are demanding more from their government—82 percent of respondents said improving citizen experience should be a top priority for 2016.

Though regulations and security often delay government technology adoption, several agencies are deploying defined solutions to help them connect with citizens in the most convenient way.

Take a Digital Approach

Government agencies need to leverage the 11 hours per day citizens already spend in front of screens. This means engaging them through mobile platforms and making relevant information more easily accessible. While government agencies have done a great job developing more responsive and intuitive web sites, they need to include other digital channels in their engagement strategy. According to a [recent survey](#), the top three digital communication channels for citizens are web sites (87 percent), social media (63 percent), and email (51 percent).

This approach puts citizens in control of their own experience. Citizens can reach out at a time that works for them and through the

channel they prefer. Ensuring consistent and convenient access to government agencies goes a long way in promoting a positive citizen experience.

Map the Citizen Experience

Before agencies can improve outward-facing channels, they must examine inner practices and procedures to assess what is working and what needs to be improved. When agency leaders put themselves in citizens' shoes, they're more likely to identify opportunities to improve citizen engagement and increase participation. Agency leaders can map the citizen experience, using a three-step process:

1. Identify: Pinpoint agency goals, challenges and processes. How do they relate to the citizen experience?

2. Learn: Gather information about the citizens who use agency services. Why are they engaged? How do they perceive their journey?

3. Leverage: Collect and analyze data to become more citizen-centric. Based on this information, define goals for improvement.

Make Incremental Changes

Incremental changes motivated by data from this type of examination will go much farther toward creating positive citizen experiences. That being said, the most effective and innovative programs often shoot for the largest audience. Agencies should aim to create the most substantial impact possible. Implementing solutions with intention is a slower, but more rewarding process in the long run. It will lead to increased citizen engagement and satisfaction for both agencies and the citizens they serve.

Bob Ainsbury is the Chief Operating Officer at GovDelivery.



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HOW GOVERNMENTS USE TECHNOLOGY TO BETTER SERVE CITIZENS

Government agencies could learn a thing or two from private enterprise about streamlining service delivery.



MAURY BLACKMAN
PRESIDENT AND CEO,
ACCELA

THERE'S NO DOUBT technology is having a tremendous impact on how government agencies engage with their citizens. An emboldened level of citizen expectation for streamlined service delivery and transparency has pushed local governments to explore innovative solutions to keep up with residents' demands.

Innovators such as Amazon, Facebook and Uber have dramatically shaped how consumers and citizens expect to be served—from tracking deliveries and requests to offering speedy service and timely product feedback. Government leaders are now turning to technological developments to offer a similar seamless experience, and it's changing the landscape of citizen satisfaction and interaction.

Delivering New Value for Citizens

While streamlining processes and efficiencies is not a new pursuit, there is a distinct shift occurring with agencies, pushing the possibilities of technology to help them become truly connected with their communities. This has far-reaching impacts on both business and personal lives. The demand is growing to deploy technologies that improve intra-office processes, as well as apps and software that create direct lines of communication between governments and citizens. Not surprisingly, this deeper, more comprehensive civic engagement is becoming the new reality, and increasingly expected by citizens throughout the country.

Becoming Proactive and Predictive

Technology and solution providers are working with government agencies to deliver solutions that put information and access directly into citizens' hands, when and where they want it, and even before they know they need it. To fully achieve this, governments are embarking on a

multi-year push to modernize their IT infrastructure. The year 2015 saw dramatic shifts in governments' willingness to implement cloud technology, which is not only delivering budget cost savings, but is also helping agencies move faster and with greater flexibility.

Citizen-facing software, apps and services are connecting residents, tourists and businesses directly to government services, and fostering greater community engagement and satisfaction in the process. The adoption of mobile 311 apps, online portals and easy online access to civic data are all ways government agencies are demonstrating their commitment to innovation and service delivery in a modern and efficient way.

Working Together

Consolidating government services is emerging across the country as a means to provide services more efficiently and improve the quality and type of services individual agencies might not be able to offer on their own. Collaboration helps public agencies move away from a traditional IT approach and increasingly make use of shared services offered by a common—and usually cloud-based—platform. This is a trend poised for growth. In fact, according to a report by PwC, the potential value of the sharing or collaborative economy will total \$335 billion by 2025.

For many cities, embracing innovation has become the critical differentiator in being able to not only attract residents and businesses, but also continue to deliver ongoing value and provide reasons for those residents to stay. The technological tools to more effectively serve citizens are here—and with them, the ability to thrive as connected, innovative and efficient government agencies.

Maury Blackman is the President and CEO of Accela.

A Platform Approach to Engagement

In today's connected world, citizens want to engage with your agency the same way they'd buy a product, track a package or read a restaurant review: online or on a mobile device, where and when it's convenient for them.

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MIKE MILBURN
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
& GENERAL MANAGER,
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CLOUD

FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES of all sizes, great customer service has never been more important, nor more feasible. Given large constituencies and limited resources, agencies have struggled to provide information and services in a timely manner. Unfairly or not, the government call center has become synonymous with long waits, unresolved problems and unhappy citizens.

However, customer, and in turn, citizen expectations are rapidly changing. Across the private sector, companies worldwide have shown they can serve large customer bases quickly and effectively across multiple channels. Those same customers are also citizens, who expect the same quality of service when they interact with agencies.

For example, if citizens are looking at an agency website on their smartphone, they want to be able to submit a question where they are—by email, social media, or phone. They want a seamless experience, with no service lags or hiccups as they jump from one channel to another.

It seems like a tall order. Private sector organizations have benefited from customer relationship management (CRM) solutions designed to manage today's multi-channel customer engagement. However, there is a misconception that CRM is too costly and difficult for agencies to implement, given the complexity of their operations and their legacy IT environments. That is no longer the case. With cloud-based solutions, like Federal Case Management, based on Salesforce Service Cloud, government agencies can serve their citizens just like their favorite retailer or restaurant would.

Federal Case Management is able to provide the same transformational customer service as Service Cloud, while adding data models and business processes tailored to the needs of government agencies. Leading agencies like Denver 311 for example, have tapped into the power of Salesforce Service Cloud to connect citizens with services. Since implementing

Salesforce, the City of Denver is now able to provide hundreds of services to their 650,000 citizens, things like reporting a pothole in the road, missed trash pickup or even the best way to register your vehicle. Each of these services is now provided in a customized experience for each citizen—and a single record of engagement within the City and County of Denver.

The Software-as-a-Service model gives agencies a lot of flexibility in how they implement the software. They can deploy Federal Case Management for something as simple as correspondence or complaint management, or something as complex as grants management, program management, or disaster management. And they can be up and running in a matter of weeks. In short, it serves any scenario in which an agency needs to manage its customer engagement, whether with the general public, partner organizations, or their own workforce.

Keep in mind that customer relationship management might not involve any direct interaction between a customer and an agent. Increasingly, people are looking for self-service options, including apps (Salesforce offers more than 3,000 partner apps on the [Salesforce AppExchange](#)), online forms, knowledge-based FAQs and community discussions.

Finally, data analytics and dashboard capabilities provide an agency with visibility into how all of their customer engagement processes are working—and how they might be improved. A robust CRM solution will do more than improve the quality of individual citizen interactions. It will help your agency improve employee productivity, free up resources to support the overarching mission and build closer relationships with constituents.

Mike Milburn is Senior Vice President and General Manager at Salesforce Service Cloud.

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REINVENTING GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION

Agencies are striving to provide digital services to match their peers in the private sector.



PAUL CHAPMAN
CHIEF INFORMATION
OFFICER, BOX

SHARING DATA STORAGE and processing power across agencies was long the aim of IT managers and engineers who were behind the federal government's first data center architectures. The Department of Agriculture's National Finance Center, which has been offering integrated shared services since 1973, was an early success. It still has more than 650,000 employees on the payroll every year.

Today, such data centers are a rarity rather than a rule. Instead, agencies face challenges sharing resources while using antiquated, cumbersome technologies in an environment where users have come to expect they will be able to easily communicate and access information quickly and easily with any device, anywhere and at any time.

The demand for new digital experiences and for collaborating across boundaries has also become a mandate. Like their private sector peers, government agencies now serve a new style of citizen that has grown up digital and demands a digitized mobile first experience.

To meet this high-performance wish list, outside-in thinking user experience designers in the government sector are turning to new methods of developing digital applications, including using specialty "micro-services." These are components of existing services or applications with proven value in the marketplace.

Today, there are many micro-services developers can bring together, integrate and curate to create new integrated service experiences for the individual citizen, agency or end user. Using these services, organizations don't have to spend millions of dollars and time and effort in rewriting applications. They can instead focus on assembling and orchestrating higher value-added capabilities and enabling a faster time to value.

Content management platforms like Box are valuable tools for building these modern shared services architectures both as a content

platform and first party application service. The recently unveiled Box for Government initiative is designed to bring together different digital product suites, helping agencies work remotely and collaboratively. The solution leverages the Box modern content platform and an ecosystem of pre-developed integrations, meeting government compliance requirements including FedRAMP, CJIS, and IRS1075, and ensuring security and privacy of sensitive government data.

More than 6,500 government entities worldwide are using Box. The U.S. Department of Justice leverages the Box content platform to coordinate across bureaus and external stakeholders.

The DOJ chose the platform to power the modernized Law Enforcement Information Sharing Program, which helps DOJ employees manage sensitive law enforcement data, collaborating with internal and external stakeholders while ensuring strict compliance with rules of evidence. DOJ relied on the Box ecosystem of partners and integrations to manage user identifies, authorize collaborators, secure endpoints and mobile devices, and create evidence reports, all leveraging the Box platform.

The ability to securely share and collaborate without requiring risky architecture changes, establishing infrastructure enclaves, and relying on insecure communication channels has become increasingly critical to agencies like DOJ. Those agencies are under pressure to operate at millennial-driven standards.

These advances remove obstacles from a generation of government workers and citizens who have grown up in the digital era, letting them collaborate in creative ways at an accelerated pace. And in the end, that may be one of the most valuable lessons millennials can leave for the next digital generation—learning to curate 21st century datasets.

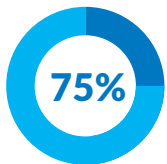
Paul Chapman is Chief Information Officer at Box.



Box for Government

A more efficient, mobile and secure way to serve the public

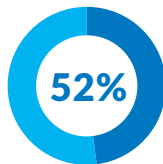
Box for Government is a secure platform that connects government employees with their information, teams and external stakeholders. Unlike traditional solutions, Box offers a cloud-based, user-centric platform that enables employees to manage sensitive content and collaborate on any device and meets FedRAMP compliance, security and privacy standard.



of federal agencies have adopted enterprise-wide data governance strategies



Government IT Priority is protecting security of agency systems and content



of Fortune 500 Companies and 28% of Global 2000 use Box



Government customers across federal, state, and local municipalities are using Box



of federal agencies have moved to the cloud, in some capacity

To learn more about Box for Government visit carahsoft.com/innovation



CREATE A CONSTITUENT CONVERSATION

Truly engaging citizens requires an active and continuing dialog.



PATRICK SMITH
CEO, ENVOVEMEDIA

WHAT CAN GOVERNMENT agencies do to create a more engaged citizenry? Any agency struggles with separation from its citizens. This is partially by design, but is also symptomatic of a lack of connectedness. We the people are partially to blame, as our “elect ‘em and forget ‘em” attitude is far too common. So what would that engaged citizenship look like? How can we achieve what I’ll call a constituent conversation?

At its core a conversation is the exchange of ideas, opinions, observations or sentiments. This definition could expand to include a real-time component. While an ongoing conversation can be an exchange of written communications, the truly effective conversation is made through the active and continuing dialog.

Two hundred and forty years ago, when our government was just getting started, a conversation required presence. You had to be there to be part of the dialog. Today we can leverage technologies to create a virtual presence, but we still face challenges. Here are some best practices for creating an effective virtual constituent conversation:

Practice 1: You have to go mobile. If you expect to reach a large percent of the population, you must include a mobile device connection point. While the 2013 U.S. Census reported nearly 75 percent of Americans have some form of internet access, a Pew Research Center American Trends Panel survey indicates 15 percent of Americans use smartphones as their primary means of online access, and this trend shows no signs of stopping. It’s much higher for constituents younger than 30. Any successful conversation outreach must ensure the mobile experience is as engaging as a computer-based experience.

Practice 2: There must be a dialog. A conversation is an exchange and requires a fair amount of listening. The technologies must facilitate that exchange. This should help engaged citizens voice their opinions, ask questions, receive feedback and follow-up. While a one-to-many broadcast can be informative, our representatives need to hear the observations and concerns of the people they represent. This virtual conversation must provide both sides the opportunity to persuade.

“Representatives must acknowledge feedback, explain decision making factors and the next steps in the process.”

Practice 3: Follow-up after the conversation is critical. In most conversations, parties want to know we are heard and our opinions considered—especially if the outcome is contrary to our position. Representatives must acknowledge feedback, explain decision making factors and the next steps in the process. Explaining the timeline and next steps continues the dialog. Scheduling additional discussions at critical milestones brings the citizenry into the continuing process of governance.

Our representatives are faced with balancing competing priorities and must make trade-offs every day. Our government is based on compromise. There will always be wide ranging opinions and priorities. No one can meet all individual expectations, but opening a virtual conversation gives the people a voice. The people must also do their part and engage in the conversation so our voice is also heard.

Patrick Smith is CEO of Envolvemedia.



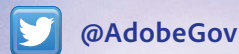
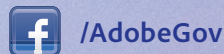
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Executive Viewpoint

ONE-ON-ONE WITH MARTHA DORRIS

Former director of strategic programs for GSA provides suggestions for improving a citizen's experience with the federal government.



MARTHA DORRIS
PRESIDENT,
DORRIS CONSULTING
INTERNATIONAL

The federal government is focusing on customer service more than ever before. But that focus may evolve in the near future. Martha Dorris championed the customer experience concept throughout her 33 years of public service. Now Founder and President of Dorris Consulting International, Dorris spoke recently with Francis Rose, host of Government Matters on ABC 7 and News Channel 8, about the federal government's evolution in dealing with customers.

Rose: What's the difference between customer service and customer experience in a government setting?

Dorris: Customer service is related to a single touch point. Customer experience is about the entire journey. It's about the perception your customer has of your organization.

Rose: Is making a citizen's experience with the federal government like the private sector a reasonable expectation?

Dorris: I think it would be great if we could provide the kind of experience that the public has with Amazon, for example. It would be great if you went to USA.gov and you were able to access different agencies, services, and information the way you can when you go on Amazon and access all of those different products and services from different companies. There are some challenges with that.

One major challenge is, we don't have a single identity management solution in the federal government, even though we tried and tried.

Having a single ID would be a big thing for customers. It would also save the government millions of dollars because every agency is building its own identity management solution. You have agencies that are providing online services or digital services where they have to create accounts; among them are the Internal Revenue Service, the Social Security Administration, Medicare, and others. If we could do it with a high security level, and build it all at once, it would save a lot of money and it would create a more seamless experience for the public.

Rose: But that is a challenge for the private sector too, because I don't log on to Ebay and buy things there the same way I log onto Amazon.

Dorris: Yes, but you can log on to Amazon and buy things from a lot of different organizations. It would require a lot of work on the back end to make sure those agencies want to work with that identity management solution and be able to go in. There are countries that have done that. Australia is one.

Rose: What are the big hold-ups if there are models where this exists around the world?

Dorris: I'm not sure that we have had the exact right solution. We have tried different solutions over time, and I mean over decades. We keep starting over, for whatever reason. I think it's just making it a priority and putting the citizen at the center of your government. We have said it for

“Having a single ID would be a big thing for customers. It would also save the government millions of dollars because every agency is building its own identity management solution.”

Services is one of the major ways that you can improve customer experience. I think industry can play a big part in that, to educate and share the way that they have done things and learn from the government as well.

years and years and years. We need to come to terms with the question of what citizen-centric government means.

We (at the General Services Administration) asked Charles Rossotti, the former Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service, what his single most important recommendation would be. He said the person at the top has to believe in customer service. Then you have to figure out how you put that in place so that it aligns throughout the entire organization, through the mechanisms we have in place.

One recommendation I have is putting customer service or customer experience in Senior Executive Service core competencies. Then it is going to start trickling down across all of the executives in the government and into the rank and file. It's not just that you need customer service standards in the performance plan of a person that answers a telephone. You need it in every single person's plan. It's the job of every person in an agency.

Another one of the holdups is, some agencies don't even believe they have customers. They don't like the terms customer service or customer experience. They want to call it operational efficiency. In reality to improve customer experience, you improve the mission. It sometimes improves efficiency because in many cases, like the VA and federal student aid, you're reducing the footprint of your contact centers and of your website, which is saving you money. It also increases the public's perception of, and trust in, government.

Rose: Does the government do a good job of understanding the customer's expectations and needs so they can improve the experience?

Dorris: I think there are pockets of agencies that do some decent research on what their customers want. But it is not brought together in a way so that you could share the data across agencies, and break it out by demographics. Some agencies try it, but it is so difficult because of the hoops we have to jump through because of the Paperwork Reduction Act.

Rose: Is there a role for the vendor community in improving customer experience in government beyond just selling services to the agencies that need or want them?

Dorris: I think trade organizations could bring a lot of the companies together in this space to help identify best practices, share them between industry and government, and even help identify ways that we can share them across government agencies. Services is one of the major ways that you can improve customer experience. I think industry can play a big part in that, to educate and share the way that they have done things and learn from the government as well.

Rose: We have less than a year until the Obama administration ends and a new President and new administration take over. What do you want to see customer experience leaders in the government do to make sure there is minimal loss of momentum between now and next year?

Dorris: Everybody just needs to look at their programs realistically, and understand the experience that their customers are having. Then they should ask themselves what experience they want their customers to have, and what the action plans are that they need to do to improve that experience now. What's within their own jurisdiction, or their own authority to do? What do they need help with? Leaders should have those lists ready when the new administration comes in, and then they should say, "Here are ten things that I need you to do." That's how to hit the ground running in the new administration.

This interview continues at Carahsoft.com/innovation/Dorris