

# How digitizing infrastructure protects against a new generation of cyberattacks



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**O**UR AGING DIGITAL infrastructure can be as harmful as our aging roads and bridges. A [study](#) by researchers at the University of Maryland examined the cybersecurity preparedness of more than 90,000 local U.S. government entities. The results were distressing. According to the study's findings, almost one-third of local governments would be unable to tell if they were under cyberattack, and another third realized after the fact that they had been attacked daily, often hourly.

We are talking about disruptions to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, Medicaid services, new business licenses and emergency relief for families. The increasingly frequent and sophisticated attacks on the hospitals, government offices, public utilities and other infrastructure that deliver these essential services have left many elected officials and employees at the state and local level wondering what can be done.

When I was the CIO of Indiana and, more recently, when I talk to customers on the front lines of these challenges, my advice has been the same:

Transform your digital infrastructure with an agile, cloud-based platform that gives you direct access to the most sophisticated tools to combat bad actors, and offload the maintenance of these systems so your internal team can focus on more strategic initiatives.

## SHOWING YOU CAN DELIVER

Getting started on such a journey involves multiple steps, and some are more obvious than others. The first step is a quick win. You have to show people what a new cloud-based, agile approach can deliver. The win doesn't have to be elaborate, but it must work, have a tangible benefit to citizens and leave everyone eager to see the next update.

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The second step is integration, integration, integration. Cloud processes can only take you so far. The rest of the way depends on making the technology solve a specific problem or making it compatible with the legacy

system that has been reliable for the past 40 years.

Third, and most important, is reskilling your workforce. Reskilling opens everyone up to new technologies and new ways of doing things. Reskilling is especially helpful when you have to make a judgment call on when to use the power of the platform and when to deviate to write a bit of code — either to optimize a customer-facing function or to provide a unique function that doesn't exist.

## LOCAL TRANSFORMATION IN ACTION

[Chicago's 311 call center](#) is an excellent example of transformation in action. It is the point of entry for residents, business owners and visitors to access information about city programs, services and events. Chicago 311 allows citizens to access that information without long hold times and with minimal impact on staff.

Since its launch, Chicago 311 has become an essential resource for activities as varied as simple informational inquiries and requests for tree trimming and pothole repairs. More broadly, the service has shown how the right cloud platform can transform the traditional call center into a modern

Source: Unsplash

contact center that unlocks everything from back-office information to self-service capabilities across a single, secure and connected experience.

This is only one example, but I like to mention it whenever anyone asks how I envision the road ahead. Yes, we are

dealing with an increased threat landscape, and yes, the economy is not so great. But the biggest challenge I see is that once agencies get started, they may not be able to keep pace with demand as people see the personal and business benefits of such digital services. ■

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