Relationship building

Transforming the employee experience means using platforms that provide digital access to services and tools

Agencies responded quickly to the pandemic by connecting their employees via digital meeting solutions and cloud email to enable telework, but now they have an opportunity to truly transform how their employees do their jobs as they begin to return to the office.

Agencies want to ensure their employees feel safe, engaged and productive as they shift into long-term telework and hybrid environments. This means evaluating new technology platforms that will improve productivity and engagement as they continue to serve the mission.

Transforming the employee experience will be challenging because the employee experience is not often well-defined, said Chris Radich, vice president of government digital strategy at Salesforce.

"The way to frame it is, how do we enable federal employees to thrive in a hybrid working environment by eliminating paper processes and providing digital access to employee services and tools," he said.

Government efforts, such as executive order 14003, give special directions to agencies on protecting the federal workforce from COVID, enabling teleworking and creating a safe working environment. This and other requirements are going "to drive employee experience demands," Radich said.

Agencies can take advantage of new platforms such as customer engagement center software-as-a-service to enable employee portals, intranets, digital forms and requests, and recruiting portals to keep pace with demands for the workforce.

There are also low-code platforms that accommodate the demand for employee applications and single sign-on across administrative, HR and emergency response and safety.

Building a plan should focus on the employee continuum that begins with interacting with a job candidate through the hiring process and bringing that person on board, Radich said. Plans that start with a user story or use case should be framed around the employee, and use cases have to be tied together into a connected transformation plan.

Use case mapping against the employee continuum "gets you to a longer-term view of what your employee transformation path or plan looks like," he said.

This will help agencies hire the right person for a job and makes it easy to onboard them using a candidate portal. It will also simplify the employee experience via easily accessible services such as an employee self-service portal, employee applications, and emergency response and employee safety capabilities.

The employee transformation path should include the ability to better manage the recruitment pipeline and employee base to keep pace with mission demands, and focus on creating a command center that provides access and visibility into performance.

Salesforce has multiple customers in government that have executed all these capabilities, Radich said. "When you move beyond a point solution to a longer-term plan is when you see the results from these digital transformation programs."

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– CHRIS RADICH, VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT DIGITAL STRATEGY, SALESFORCE

There are three steps agencies can take to get started, beginning with selecting the right low-code platform. "Customization is a killer of productivity and results on IT modernization projects across federal government," he said. "If you limit your code, you're in a better position."

Salesforce has invested in Work.com, which provides out-of-the-box capabilities, such as an employee concierge for self-service, and workplace safety applications for contact tracing. "We use our legacy in relationship management to help you build trust with your employees," Radich said.

The second step is to build a business case to complement the employee transformation plan. Using the Salesforce platform to boost employee engagement, for instance, has been shown to provide a 296 percent return on investment. It also speeds up application development by 50 percent.

Finally, the third step is to establish a cross-functional employee experience committee or working group. Agencies can also bring in broader stakeholders, such as administration and facilities directors. They should leverage executive order 14003 as a tailwind to getting these organizations set up, and drive partnerships among agency leaders, he said.

New requirements will continue to arise and impact the federal employee, Radich said, which underscores the importance of having the right platform in place. This ensures that "digital capabilities, applications, and investments in process, have a place to go and be executed on," he said.

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