

How Can Government Re-Invent Itself by Optimizing Constituent Communications?

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ABSTRACT

WITH THE INITIAL INTERNET BOOM OF THE 1990S NOW FIRMLY BEHIND US, WE CAN BEGIN TO TAKE FOR GRANTED SOME OF THE CONSIDERABLE BENEFITS THAT EMERGED IN ITS WAKE. WE ARE MORE INTERCONNECTED THAN EVER BEFORE, AND WE HAVE ACCESS TO MORE INFORMATION THAN EVER.

BUT FOR EVERY TECHNOLOGY-DERIVED TRIUMPH, ANOTHER CHALLENGE ARISES. THE NUMBER OF CHANNELS FOR COMMUNICATION MULTIPLIES BUT DELIVERING THE RIGHT MESSAGE TO THE RIGHT AUDIENCE ONLY BECOMES MORE VEXING. MOUNTAINS OF DATA GROW LARGER AND RICHER YET MORE DIFFICULT TO MANAGE, PARTICULARLY IN AN AGE WHEN RESOURCES ARE OFTEN STRETCHED.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES PRESENT A SPECIAL SET OF CONCERNS FOR GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS. HOW CAN AGENCIES MEET RISING CITIZEN EXPECTATIONS WHILE CONTROLLING COSTS? FOR EXECUTIVES, THE ANSWER LIES IN FINDING NEW WAYS OF LEVERAGING EXISTING DATA AND RESOURCES WITHOUT HAVING TO SCRAP EXISTING IT INFRASTRUCTURE.

PLACED IN THIS CONTEXT, TODAY'S FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES MUST FACE UP TO TWO IMPERATIVES IF THEY ARE TO TRULY THRIVE. THEY MUST RE-INVENT THE WAYS IN WHICH THEIR INTERNAL BUREAUCRACY FUNCTIONS WHILE ALSO RE-THINKING THE WAY THEY INTERACT WITH THE CITIZENS THEY SERVE

[AGENCIES] CAN COMMUNICATE MORE EFFECTIVELY WITHIN, MAKE MORE INFORMED DECISIONS, AND INCREASE CUSTOMER—OR SHALL WE SAY CITIZEN—SATISFACTION.

Challenges Facing Federal Government Agencies

On a broad level, it is critical for federal government agencies to come to terms with their staggering reservoirs of information. It is necessary for their communication processes to keep pace with their IT infrastructure. And it is crucial for them to move toward an ethos of integrated information and services, recasting themselves as a single “enterprise” rather than a conglomeration of disparate agencies.

As funding demands balloon, agencies are forced to focus on only the most essential IT projects. Any underlying technology must support a revolution in business processes, work flows, security, data integration and management, online account management, and customer communication management.

Back to our original question: “How can government agencies re-invent their internal bureaucracy and re-think the way they interact with citizens?” By utilizing the latest **customer intelligence software**, agencies can create a single, high-definition view of their customers. Consequently, they can communicate more effectively within, make more informed decisions, and increase customer—or shall we say *citizen*—satisfaction.

Ultimately, any serious e-government initiative must address issues on four fronts:

e-Services, or finding a better way to electronically deliver government information, programs and services

e-Management, or streamlining the way the government operates by using IT to enable new business processes, integrate data and improve communication flow

e-Democracy, or using IT and communications to increase citizen participation in policy decision-making

e-Exchange, or empowering people to make transactions — from paying taxes to buying government surplus equipment — through electronic channels

Customer intelligence software has much to offer on all these fronts. For now, let’s focus on three particularly challenging areas for government agencies and consider how software solutions can help overcome them.

Data Quality

Federal government agencies have access to massive amounts of data about the citizens they serve. The question is, what are they doing to leverage this data? Also, in what form does it exist and who can easily access it? In many cases, important information is in hand but it exists in silos where key personnel are unable to tap into it. No matter its potential, inaccessible data is of dubious value.

Consider a situation in which three different law enforcement agencies are working on the same case—or three different cases that might lead to the same suspect. If key information—previous criminal records, incident locations, etc.—is isolated in silos, enforcement efforts may stall. But with one federated view of data infrastructure (both old and new) accessible to all authorized parties, the chances of apprehending a suspect suddenly rise.

Customer data can be an organization’s most important asset, so the quality of that data is of the highest consequence. **Data quality software** can help agencies manage all their information, capturing it accurately and completely in a timely manner and in a consistent format. Such software can also free it from silos, making it accessible to all authorized users.

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All told, data quality software assists agencies with capturing and collecting source data; data integration, or combining from multiple, disparate sources; data profiling; data cleansing; and data augmentation and enhancement, the process of enriching internally collected information with that from external sources.

With data quality software, government agencies can create an accurate view of their customers and then integrate that intelligence into business operations. They can pinpoint opportunities in order to improve targeting, streamline operations and generate more effective communications.

Let's illustrate what we're talking about by way of an example. A large government agency was in the practice of regularly providing data to an insurance company that covered its employees. Unfortunately, the employee data came from two separate lists that contained a significant amount of overlap. They were also of poor quality and in some cases contained individuals who were no longer with the agency.

If it was to make better use of this data, the agency desperately needed to have it cleansed and formatted. Duplicate data, fields, and entries needed to be reconciled and each record needed to be parsed into its appropriate components.

The agency deployed a data quality and management application with a user-friendly workflow console. This helped them identify and consolidate duplicate records and compare the consolidated list against the insurance company's existing customer base.

Because it cleansed and integrated all its information into one database, the agency was able to develop an accurate, single view of each employee. Likewise, the insurance company was able to get a better look at each prospective customer, helping it enjoy more accurate prospect identification and targeting.

The workflow management console provided centralized job set-up, processing and analysis of results so users could manage jobs ranging from a single application to those incorporating multiple solutions. Business users felt comfortable utilizing the technology, and marketers appreciated the GUI's visual representation of the direct marketing process.

Document Creation

Organizations in the public and private sector spend billions of dollars every year on document creation. But where does all that money—and all that paper—go? Sometimes, they themselves may be hard-pressed to answer the question.

Show me a database in which 15 percent of the customer addresses are bad and I will show you an organization that is wasting enormous amounts of time, money, and energy. But show me an agency that's using the latest **document creation software** and I'll show you an organization producing documents in less time with fewer resources while still achieving the desired results.

Whether your agency is dealing with simple letters, full-color mailers, statements or messages within a statement, you need the capability to develop documents quickly, collaborate with other users, reuse content and maintain consistency throughout your organization. Document creation software makes it easy to create in print or electronic formats and deliver across multiple channels.

The impact of producing more organized, personalized, effective content can be felt far down the line. While streamlined operations help an agency function better internally and save significant amounts of money, citizens will appreciate better quality of service—e.g., fewer follow-up calls—inevitably leading to higher satisfaction and loyalty rates.

GOVERNMENT LEADERS, PLANNERS AND ANALYSTS AROUND THE WORLD USE LOCATION INTELLIGENCE TO PLAN SUSTAINABLE GROWTH, IMPROVE PUBLIC SERVICES AND SHARE INFORMATION WITH CITIZENS.

How important are document creation processes to public sector organizations? Consider the case of a Circuit Court office tasked with completing the paperwork that helped domestic abuse victims gain court protection. Copies of these critical “Orders of Protection” used to take days or even weeks to complete and were further delayed by required distribution to law enforcement and social services personnel. Because the court’s manual form-based process was stalling the completion of the paperwork, it was putting the victims who filed the orders in harm’s way for far too long.

To address this critical logjam, the Circuit Court implemented a document creation solution that helped connect previously- incompatible back-office systems to one another. It took information that was previously only available to certain people in certain departments and made it accessible to all authorized parties, both inside and outside the courthouse. Despite the fact that they were accessing key data via disparate systems across numerous organizations, public safety, criminal justice, and social services case workers were now able to truly collaborate for the first time.

Through the use of interactive electronic documents, the Court was now able to go online and immediately create orders of protection, automatically sending copies to all relevant parties including the petitioner. With delays reduced from days to minutes, law enforcement officials could now deliver orders quickly, putting the court in a position to do all in its power to protect its most vulnerable citizens in their greatest time of need.

Location Intelligence

Some estimates contend that approximately 80 percent of all business data has a geographical element to it. Agencies that know how to leverage that location component can unlock the potential of their existing information and reap enormous benefits.

By using the right analytic capabilities, organizations can access sophisticated spatial analysis tools, transforming business intelligence into **location intelligence**. This means an agency can geographically analyze, measure and compare data from operations in conjunction with external data such as network-asset locations, citizen characteristics, revenue trending, and demographics.

Some examples of what location intelligence empowers key government decision-makers to do:

- Centralize tax jurisdiction processes while ensuring compliance
- Successfully manage public assets and projects
- Improve public safety and law enforcement, as well as disaster preparedness
- Share data with citizens via simple, cost-effective solutions (e.g., self-service web portals)

Government leaders, planners and analysts around the world use location intelligence to plan sustainable growth, improve public services and share information with citizens. Running the range from desktop and enterprise software, developer tools and data, geographic analysis solutions help governments enhance service offerings, gain operational efficiencies and maximize their operating budget.

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Let's look at one real-life example:

A government agency was struggling to handle data requests that streamed in from individuals, businesses and other agencies at a rate of nearly 1,000 per day. Internal staff members were spending so much time responding to the requests, they were unable to focus on their mission-critical tasks.

By using location intelligence software, the agency was able to create a web-based portal that leveraged their existing data and made it available to the appropriate customers. This intuitive, powerful location-based analysis tool was equally useful to internal and external parties. The application served to leverage and integrate common databases and data formats without any cumbersome middleware or costly data extraction, optimizing the agency's previous technology investments.

Best of all, the tool allowed agency data to reach more end-users than ever before while actually requiring fewer internal resources. While staff returned to their core tasks, the web-based portal handled data requests that would previously have required as many as 15 skilled workers.

Summary

Take a moment to imagine a single government agency that makes full use of the software we have highlighted in this article. Now imagine the impact: a workplace where data accuracy and organizational efficiency are commonplace. Documents are created swiftly, and satisfied citizens sense a closer relationship with their government. One last image to conjure up: smiles on the faces of your fellow executives when your agency swiftly recoups its initial software investment.

The solutions we have discussed here are merely one part of a larger snapshot, an end-to-end process often called customer communication management. Software solutions in today's marketplace can help drive organizational improvements in everything from database to delivery. Most importantly, they can help federal government agencies realize their promise and potential, running more efficiently and better serving the very people they were designed to help.

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