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DIGITAL GOVERNMENT: MOVING FROM VISION TO REALITY

Do agencies** really "get" digital government? Do they understand its promise and potential, and do they see it as vital to their future? A recent survey, commissioned by Unisys, explored the perceived and real benefits that agencies are realizing in their efforts to transform through digital technologies.

Digital government, as explored through the Unisys survey, is not just about the adoption of leading-edge technologies, such as virtualization, cloud, mobile and advanced analytics. Instead, digital government is about transformation. It's about leveraging these technologies to transform how agencies manage their operations and deliver services.

This survey, of federal, state and local agencies, looked at where agencies are at on that path to transformation—and where they see that path taking them.

AGENCIES AT ALL STAGES OF ADOPTING DIGITAL GOVERNMENT AGREE ON THE BENEFITS

Nearly all agencies agree on the potential benefits of moving toward digital government, regardless of their progress. Most agree that digital government speeds service delivery, improves quality and lowers costs. Most also agree digital government helps break down agency silos and provides multiple ways of enabling greater interagency collaboration and idea-sharing.

Many of the survey respondents also agree digital government helps agencies meet compliance requirements and mandates; improves citizen perceptions of government

operations; and results in a more resilient, agile and secure infrastructure. In general, respondents from agencies further along in their adoption of digital government are most likely to find these benefits highly important.

MANY AGENCIES HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS, BUT OTHERS ARE TAKING A WAIT-AND-SEE APPROACH

Most agencies, particularly at the state and local levels, are well along the path of realizing the promise of digital services delivery. These "digitally mature" agencies are more likely to have adopted comprehensive security management, IT service management visibility, cloud applications and infrastructure, improved data management and analytics, and mobile computing; and are more likely to focus on user-centered design, especially since these agencies tend to interact more directly with citizens. These agencies also tend to use integrated approaches across and throughout the agency.

Agencies further along in their digital government journey have seen their internal cultures transform as a result. These agencies tend to be changing how they approach issues like governance and change management. Consider communication, for example—agencies just getting started with digital government or those that remain skeptical still tend to think of communication primarily as outbound, and continue to use traditional communications like face-to-face and phone calls. Those

further along the path, however, are far more likely to be making robust use of digital channels for inbound communications, and many have advanced to full two-way digital communication.

Some other agencies are taking wait and see approach. In fact, nearly one in three reports taking a slower approach toward adopting digital government strategies. Of the survey respondents, 44 percent say that while their agencies are moving forward with digital government, they have not yet seen measurable benefits.

Those moving forward at a slower pace tend to be most concerned about security, change management and IT governance. They're also challenged with a shortage of knowledgeable IT personnel, cost and outmoded development approaches. Yet these agencies continue to make progress, albeit slowly.

In many cases, they are engaging third-party contractors and consultants to help them surmount both the technical and cultural challenges. The survey found nearly 70 percent of agencies either fully outsource this work to third parties or use a combination of in-house and outsourced resources. The survey also found one in four agencies plan to increase their use of third-party contractors to help with digital government initiatives in the coming year. When looking for third party help, agencies put a premium on expertise in security, data integrity and digital government.

DIGITAL GOVERNMENT REQUIRES CHANGE, AND FOR THE MOST PART AGENCIES ARE WILLING TO MAKE THOSE CHANGES

Digital government requires changing the application development process, and how agencies design and upgrade their IT architecture. In large part, agencies are willing to do that—and more. According to the survey, more than half plan to fully modernize their IT infrastructure and development methods to support their digital government initiatives, and 63 percent are adopting more user-centric design and application development

methodologies. Being open to new approaches like these will promote agility and faster deployment.

The survey also found agencies are willing to adopt critical elements that promote digital government. For example, 72 percent of agencies have or are in the process of bolstering security management to protect remote users as well as infrastructure assets, and 79 percent have either adopted or are in the process of enabling comprehensive IT service management visibility and user support. Other high-ranking initiatives include public and private cloud applications and infrastructure, support for mobile computing and communications, a focus on user-centered design for developing interfaces and business processes, advanced data analytics, and robust application development operations.

Digital government is slowly becoming a reality for agencies at all levels of government. While some may still have some concerns, most have moved ahead to some extent because of the undeniable benefits—service delivery, improved quality, lower cost and the ability to break down silos that have slowed and complicated government services. There are still clearly issues that need work—especially the lack of internal expertise and security—but the benefits of this new service delivery mechanism are coming through loud and clear.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

Agencies that are furthest along the path to digital government are most likely to have invested in these critical elements:

- ▶ Security management that protects remote users and agency infrastructure assets
- ▶ Comprehensive IT service management visibility
- ▶ Public and private cloud applications and infrastructure
- ▶ Support for mobile computing and communication
- ▶ User-centered design for developing interfaces and business processes
- ▶ Advanced data analytics
- ▶ Robust application development, including more modularity and reuse of common IT services

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