

PILLAR TWO:

AUTOMATED AND MOBILE-ENABLED BACK OFFICE



Blame it on the iPhone.

The iPhone, and every smart device that's followed, has redefined how people communicate, research, learn, buy and share. They have also changed people's expectations of the products, brands and services they interact with and has forced business systems to evolve.

Government is not immune. The status quo is no longer acceptable when a government worker is asked why it takes months to create a purchase order and only 30 seconds to hail a Lyft. Employees are often overextended and working with antiquated tools and technology to perform business functions. They still operate in a largely transactional manner, making it difficult to predict or anticipate change. Government staff, as well as constituents, want government services to be intuitive, consistent, modern, insightful and mobile-enabled.

The back office can be a springboard for modernization. Better back-office systems — from human capital to finance to procurement and supply chain — allow employees to deliver timely and accurate front-office services to the constituents they serve. With modern, digital solutions, employees spend less time on redundant tasks and more time helping customers or pursuing strategic endeavors. Simply put, back-office modernization lets government agencies work faster, more accurately and more efficiently.

For example, a cloud-hosted finance system can enable agencies to procure the tools and materials they need, ensure they have the right suppliers, negotiate contracts, track funds and the allocation of those funds, follow how employee time is charged against projects tied to grants and more. A companion human capital management (HCM) system, meanwhile, can help governments attract the best and brightest employees and engage talent more effectively.

Migrating finance and HR systems to the cloud also allows public sector entities to take advantage of

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evolving technologies like chatbots and predictive analytics, powered by the transformational potential of artificial intelligence (AI).

For example, experts predict the escalating growth of AI technologies embedded directly into human resource and financial management processes to automate even complex, non-routine activities. Meanwhile, blockchain and distributed ledger technology will transform the delivery of public and private services, redefine the relationship between government and the citizen in terms of data sharing, transparency and trust, and fundamentally improve the delivery of government services. And robotic process automation tools have the potential to remove the drudgery of repeatable work, allowing employees to focus on more substantive activities.

MODERNIZE IN FOUR MONTHS, NOT 40

Nazer Uddin is the finance manager for the Fox River Water Reclamation District in Elgin, Ill. Previously, he and his team had to create and distribute seven paper copies of a purchase order each time they ordered supplies. Fox River adopted Oracle Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) for financials, purchasing, project accounting and grants along with a planning and budgeting solution. It took only four months to convert the on-premises system to the nimble and cost-effective Oracle ERP Cloud. The solution massively reduced Fox River's ongoing costs and internal resource pressure and delivered reporting, ease of use and world class functionality. By leveraging the embedded social networking tool, conversations and notes about any issue can be documented and attached to an individual transaction, providing a clear record of due diligence and detailed information for auditors.

TACTICS FOR BACK OFFICE MODERNIZATION SUCCESS

1. COMMIT TO CHANGE:

The modus operandi for many government organizations implementing back-office solutions in the 1990s and 2000s was to purchase and customize off-the-shelf software to fit their processes, even if those processes were inefficient or ineffective. Today's cloud-based software solutions include industry best practices, and adopting those best practices enable an agency to take advantage of the latest technology and updates.

For example, the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services struggled with a legacy system that included about 185 active interfaces that had received approximately 13,000 custom code modifications over the years. Today, the state is transitioning to a cloud-based financial and HR system that will standardize and streamline its work processes. Career employees can more easily advance within the state because they won't need to relearn a new system every time they are promoted.

Getting there requires a top-down commitment to evolving processes. Agencies that don't set themselves up to adapt to change are more likely to revert to old business processes.

2. PREPARE STAFF FOR THE "NEW NORMAL":

Beyond leadership commitment, agencies must institutionalize their business modernization plans. That idea needs to permeate throughout the organization, from executives to frontline workers. If staff aren't on board, modernization efforts may stall. Leaders should set expectations ahead of time and be consistent throughout the project to ensure they deliver on their promise and commitment to change. Change management and communication are critical throughout the project.

3. ENSURE DATA QUALITY AND RETENTION:

The more digital data an agency produces, the more business intelligence it can gather, and the more predictive analytics can inform and improve government services. But data is often spread across disparate and disconnected systems.

Fox River Water Reclamation District serves 200,000 people and treats an average of 38 million gallons of wastewater daily. To meet this commitment, field service workers require an instant connection to the district's headquarters. A broken wastewater pipe may need an emergency requisition to order a required part. Extra chemicals for wastewater treatment might be required in the event of an environmental disaster. Today, using the Oracle ERP Procurement Cloud, Fox River can approve, release and issue a purchase order to a vendor in less than a minute.

THE ORACLE APPROACH — AN INTEGRATED, CLOUD-BASED BACK OFFICE

Back-office modernization requires two primary components: integrated technology systems that cover all facets of business operations and skilled personnel who find purpose and mission in working for a modern government entity.

Modern systems: Oracle Enterprise Resource Planning Cloud, Human Capital Management Cloud and Enterprise Performance Management Cloud give government agencies a single, integrated solution. Oracle's Cloud delivers embedded best practices that cross lines of business between HR and finance, providing process efficiencies and transparency. Workflows and approvals are available and configurable, so agencies can take advantage of best practices while maintaining compliance. A single solution on a single platform sharing a single

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THE POWER OF INTEGRATED HR AND FINANCE

Maintaining human resources and financial data in a single system has five major benefits:

1. SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE:

Because HR data is an essential part of the business infrastructure, integration can impact security. Single sign-on (SSO) security is straightforward to implement in a unified platform environment and avoids the complexities of workaround fixes in a multivendor environment.

2. WORKFLOW AND BUSINESS PROCESS:

A single, unified cloud platform cuts across processes and domains to ensure consistent workflows. For instance, when a purchase requisition is requested, the process can determine the approval routing by pulling from both ERP and HCM data.

3. REPORTING AND ANALYSIS:

A unified platform provides a single data source and a single reporting environment across the enterprise. Agencies can drive transactional reporting needs or run predictive analyses knowing that the security and access approvals are the same in both HR and financial systems.

4. COMMON SELF-SERVICE ACCESS:

A manager is also an employee. A unified cloud platform provides a common entry point for everyone to have a consistent user experience across multiple domains. The degree of system access is tied to each user's log-on, no matter what level.

5. SINGLE DATA ENTRY POINT:

A single user experience eliminates redundancy and provides one system of record and information that is accurate, rich in content and current.

BY SIMPLIFYING THE MEANS FOR COLLECTING AND ANALYZING A COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE OF THE WORKFORCE, SENIOR LEADERS AND FRONTLINE MANAGERS CAN ALIGN STAFF SKILLS WITH EVOLVING MISSION NEEDS.

data model allows data to flow seamlessly between departments. Meanwhile, automation, analytics and reporting features ensure an agency is smarter and better prepared — game changers that are key to market competitiveness.

Government employees do their work in and around the community. Through the seamless connection of mobile devices and applications, they can make instant assessments and impactful decisions. Oracle back-office solutions are device-agnostic and include an embedded social platform to help agencies track activities and adhere to compliance requirements.

Oracle also gives public sector agencies the flexibility they need to either adopt a complete back-office transformation or to incrementally move some functions to the cloud while leaving others on premises. According to Celeste O'Dea, senior manager for public sector application strategy at Oracle, agencies often transition planning and budgeting to the cloud first, followed by HR and finance.

"Many agencies use workbooks and Excel spreadsheets to manage their budgets, so it's easy to start making changes there because they don't have an existing legacy solution like they commonly do for finance and HR," says O'Dea. "Budgeting is easiest to start with because the rest of the finance functions really have to transition en masse."

Empowered personnel: Agencies also need the right staff to deliver on their commitment to the public. When the private sector is competing for the same talent, government agencies must be able to quickly source candidates and offer the kind of digital back-office experience that suits today's workers. Technology can help here, too. New machine learning capabilities in Oracle HCM Cloud reduce

the time it takes to fill open positions by automatically highlighting qualified individuals. Adaptive intelligence can identify best-fit candidates, not only according to how they line up against a requisition, but also based on how well-suited they might be to succeed other people in the organization.

"Because they are often constrained by civil service rules and regulations, public sector agencies might only have data relevant to the job function or functions a person has performed over their career," says O'Dea. "But that person might have other skills the agency is not aware of. Therefore, an agency may not have a good picture of its existing talent pool."

By simplifying the means for collecting and analyzing a comprehensive picture of the workforce, senior leaders and frontline managers can align staff skills with evolving mission needs.

Finally, machine learning in Oracle HCM Cloud applies algorithmic analytical models to preprocessed data to uncover hidden patterns or trends. Those patterns or trends can then be used to identify existing employees to consider grooming for advancement, predict the correct response to inquiries or identify the best candidates for talent sourcing.

Smaller entities may find it easier to move to the cloud because they may have less complex systems or less digital data. Larger entities like the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services will need to retain some of their legacy systems or retain data for a certain number of years due to regulatory requirements. In those cases, the availability of Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) solutions in addition to Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solutions ensures an agency can easily manage both cloud-based and on-premises systems in the same operational ecosystem.

For more information on Oracle cloud solutions, visit oracle.com/publicsector.

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