

How shifting public servant requirements are driving digital workplace strategies



Far from being finished after enabling remote work, many public-sector workplaces are embarking on a critical transitory period. Management is thinking holistically about the evolving workplace. It must provide multiple competencies now expected by both staff members and constituents who interact with government staff and agencies.

Solutions must attract the next generation of public servants, without alienating more experienced staff who may be less comfortable with change and newer technology. They also must accommodate where, when and how staff and constituents may interact with government agencies.

A new way of thinking about the workplace is needed, says Sunil Rajan at Verizon. As the leader of Verizon's Future of Work for the Public Sector, Rajan has spent the past seven years focused on creating and supporting digital workplaces.

Before the pandemic, discussions about digital transformation in the public sector traditionally focused on applications, Rajan says. This piecemeal approach may have met specific task requirements well enough then, but it now can make agencies seem out-of-date and inefficient. Neither promises to attract talent or best serve constituents.

"The future of the workplace has now become more in terms of cloud-based experiences and how do you improve productivity, versus simply providing basic hardware kinds of aspects," Rajan says. "How do we make a more sustainable transformation so that we don't have to keep peeling Band-Aids regularly?"

Seamless, trusted, omnichannel access and the ability to adapt quickly to changing requirements are top considerations for government agencies serious about their digital and workplace transformations.

Meeting emerging public enterprise priorities is likely to require:



Moving data and processes to the cloud.



Updating telephony systems.



Integrating applications seamlessly.



Providing fixed wireless access.



Using 5G connectivity.

The primary end-user for the resultant digital solution is the public-sector employee. As one generation of public servants reaches retirement age, another generation of digital natives must be wooed. Modern workplaces that automate repetitive tasks allow for easy analytics and provide collaboration tools that may help attract workforce members who might otherwise be lured by corporations.

Government sector workplace digitization efforts are expected to take between three and five years to be at least on par with private firms, as a sector, Rajan says. This transitory phase will redefine the employee experience and can provide secure, efficient communication among and across agencies, virtually anywhere the employee is located. For example, Verizon's fixed wireless access tool allows staff members to communicate on a secure line at home, in a police squad car or at a project site.



This phase also may redefine the customer experience, which has taken on greater importance in the past couple of years. Agencies should take into account that:

- Employees have the data and tools needed to effectively assist constituents.
- Assets can quickly scale to match situational requirements.
- Service is consistent across all channels.
- Constituents trust an agency's handling of their personal data.

What once might have been thought of as a stop-gap measure must now be its own comprehensive digital workplace strategy that takes the needs of multiple users into account. Consider that:

- In many instances, public servants will continue to work remotely, and may even be required to do so.
- The sector's technological-development lag behind the private sector increasingly is no longer considered acceptable.
- The importance of cybersecurity is well understood by constituents, and agencies with poor security may lose their trust. More sophisticated and prevalent cyberattacks could cost agencies not only their reputations, but their ability to effectively do their jobs and protect their finances.
- Workplace collaboration is vital to the success of agencies, as projects become larger and more complex, requiring multiple parties to participate in their planning, execution and operation.

Helping to enable the resultant new digital landscape is Verizon and its technology partners, who work closely with government agencies to create seamless, scalable and flexible portfolios.

To learn how two large government municipalities moved processes to the cloud and created effective communication systems across multiple agencies, [register](#) for the Transforming Public Sector Communications by Moving to the Cloud webinar. Rajan and the other panelists will share their advice for agencies considering similar efforts, as well as what was learned in the process and what's next for the future of public-sector workplaces.

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