

The two faces of digital transformation

As the public sector progresses beyond digital implementation to evolution, Idox shares its views on how a people-centred approach to digitisation can help organisations get more from their investments, as well as support the creation of effective end-to-end digital journeys...

Turning to technology

The implementation of innovative technology to support smarter working, service transformation, and improved engagement has been a strategy adopted by the public sector for some time. However, just a few years ago, the notion of digitisation was still in its infancy – in 2015, a Deloitte global public sector survey showed that it was viewed as just ‘an opportunity’ for 82% of public sector organisations, with 88% still hoping to improve customer experience as a result of digital transformation.

Fast forward two years and a large proportion of public sector organisations are already in the next phase of digital transformation – teams are looking beyond implementation to evolution, and how they can develop their strategies further to meet ever-increasing customer demand and expectation.

With the first wave of digital implementation tried and tested, we know that such technologies present significant opportunities for improvements and savings in the public sector; we know that there’s always room for digital to grow and evolve; and we know that the capacity to embed digital into everyday practices – from booking an MOT to paying for council tax online – is now the norm.

But, how can organisations accelerate digital progression and get more from their investments?

Digital in the second stage

With the spotlight on public sector organisations to drive digital, there are many commentators calling for the sector to do more – to move faster, to transform quicker. And with the Government reaffirming its commitment to harnessing digital in its 2017-2020 Transformation Strategy, and funding to support Artificial Intelligence, 5G and digital skills in the Autumn Budget 2017, the pressure to progress is likely to intensify. Digital is about to hit its second stage.

As a partner to over 750 public sector organisations, Idox has developed a 'ground-up' approach to digital that takes into account not only the technology driving the processes, but also the culture of each organisation, along with its employee and customer needs. This focus on putting the human element back at the heart of digital was echoed in a previous podcast from Mike Bracken, former head of the GDS, who noted 'everything we do is based on users and user-testing'.

Overall, there is now recognition that public services should be determined not by the organisational and legal constraints of government departments, but by the needs of people.

Beyond digital transformation?

According to the 2017 Digital Business Study by MIT Sloan Management Review and Deloitte, there is still progress to be made across sectors to enhance digital maturity. Of the respondents surveyed, only 22% claimed to be working for a company that cultivates a digital culture and strives for experimentation, agility, risk-taking and collaboration. Yet appetite to continue investing is strong, with 61% reporting their organisation has plans for digital investment in the next 12-18 months.

Ultimately, understanding the two 'faces' of digital transformation – the organisational and the citizen perspective – and identifying technology that simultaneously caters to both, is pivotal for successful evolution, and ensuring technological investments stand the test of time.

'Two-faced' digital planning

To truly facilitate progression, investments should focus on creating meaningful, end-to-end journeys for the two 'faces' of digital. On the citizen side, every process, action and engagement needs to be simple, quick, consistent and informative; for organisations, the focus needs to be on meeting this demand but in a more coordinated, efficient, productive and cost-effective way than before.

Consider an online planning proposal – a local authority may have the right technology in place to allow citizens to submit an application online, automate the storage of this data and trigger a site visit. However, if it lacks the digital capabilities to offer an online payment facility or automate progress updates, the 'journey' – on both sides – becomes broken.

By planning circular journeys that support a continuous flow of digital actions, public sector organisations can achieve tangible outcomes that not only deliver cost savings, but also serve as a solid foundation for future growth.

Digitising for the future

Although digitisation is now a reality for the public sector – not just an 'opportunity' waiting to be had – reaching beyond transformation to maintenance and evolution requires more than just technology. People, culture and mindset need to have equal weighting to help organisations stand out from the crowd and meet their own expectations, as well as those of their customers.

We talk about end-to-end transformation as the goal but in reality, it's a continuous, transformative process that never stops learning.

Interested in finding out more?

Idox delivers end-to-end digital transformation to over 90% of local authorities across the UK. If you would like to find out more about our views on digital and how we can support your local authority, please email marketing@idoxgroup.com