



# TRANSFORM. DELIVER. SUSTAIN.

BY TERRI JONES



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## **Transform. Deliver. Sustain.**

Digital transformation may be the trend you're hearing about, but you might be grappling with multi-year projects for consolidation, centralization, shared services and modernization. You're likely facing thousands of cyber-attacks daily, but still have expectations to improve the customer experience for staff and constituents. It's an overwhelming list of tasks, but it's at the heart of the survival and potential of state enterprise IT efforts.

Read on for some ideas on how to balance the pull of digital transformation with the realities of a large public sector IT effort. But more importantly, learn how to invest scarce funding to not only transform your operations, but deliver it quickly and sustain your success, project after project.

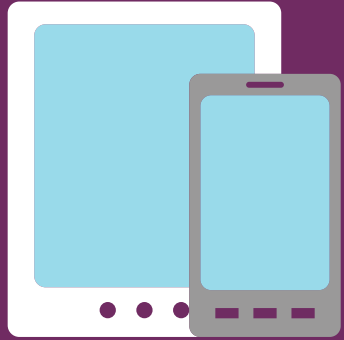
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## PART 1: TRANSFORM



# 3 REASONS **THIS** IS YOUR YEAR OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION





It's been 15 years since I saw my first workflow automation solution. Hating paper as I did, and facing a compliance challenge at my state agency, I immediately saw the potential of automation to answer some challenges my housing department faced. Of course, I was an IT Director and at that time and had more faith in the power of technology than others. I had no trouble shifting my paradigm, but my peers... not so much.

Jumping forward more than a decade, we constantly hear about digital transformation and many countries have "Digital First" initiatives underway. In the US, this transformation and its potential can intersect with other state IT needs like consolidation, centralization, improved security and better efficiency. That's the internal side, but the external side is also critical to consider.

With each of us carrying a smartphone, our customers' expectations have never been higher. And the old phrase, "customer service," is being replaced with a hard look at "customer experience." And, during this decade, our own staff moved forward because of the technology our smartphones put into our pockets. I vividly remember coming back from seeing a workflow and trying to persuade my non-IT peers about how it could help them. They humored me, but I did not mistake that for acceptance that we could "go digital."

Today, I believe there is wide acceptance of the need to "go digital." But in your mind it may feel like an overwhelming burden, particularly if you are already understaffed and facing modernization while fighting off thousands of cyber attacks. So, while we no longer need a staff paradigm shift to "go digital", we may be wary of taking on yet another far-reaching initiative. Or the digital transformation may have happened in pockets across state government, but has still avoided becoming a strategic value.





Moreover, as a CIO or IT Director, there is no shortage of IT trends you're expected to evaluate and chase. Cyber-security pokes at us, blockchain and AI are peeking around the corner and you may still be doing an inventory to figure what IoT means for you. These are important trends to watch, but here's **three reasons why digital transformation needs to be at the top of your 2018 list:**

### 1 Persistent budget uncertainty

The volatility of state revenues is historic. Collectively, revenues are up over 2007, but individual states are suffering. Recent tax code changes and their revenue impact is not yet known, and most state legislatures continue to meet in off-budget years to adjust to changing costs and revenue shortfalls. It might be natural to think, "spend nothing, wait for better times," but we've lived through more than 10 years of volatility, and with changes at the federal level, we may face additional budget challenges. We don't know if, or when it will get better, but we do know that digital transformation offers continuous staff efficiency improvement and cost reductions. This means driving savings and efficiency gains that state government needs to offset the continuing revenue uncertainty.

### 2 The indefensibility of paper-based process

Earlier, I alluded to the change in expectations driven by the devices we carry. In this environment, states start behind in customer experience if we don't figure out ways to harness online and self-service options that mirror what the business community offers. Add to this the lost documents, paper storage costs, disaster preparation and lack of automation, and the issue is compounded. State agencies that don't embrace a digital strategy face an indefensible reliance on paper with the possibility of falling further behind in any effort to drive efficiency and cost savings.

### 3 The next thing problem

Every day, an IT analyst somewhere suggests the next big thing that we absolutely, positively must have. It can seem like we will never catch up. I take these pronouncements with a grain of salt, but I do believe that following some trends and tools positions us for continuous improvement. Digital transformation is one of those moments. Your work in 2018 to implement digital transformation initiatives will support existing needs to deliver solutions faster, drive efficiency and save money. It will improve customer experience and help you survive the volatility of budgets and political cycles. But here's another important thought. Organizations that adopt a mindset that embraces IT change as likely and beneficial set themselves up well for the future. Digital transformation, with benefits for staff and customers, is the type of technological moment that reinforces the positive aspects of change for the hard-working staff that have heard these promises before.



If this has helped convince you that this is your year for digital transformation, next you'll see which tools to use to deliver digital transformation without breaking the bank or the backs of your staff. ■



## PART 2: DELIVER

# THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION







## **“WHEN IS THAT GOING TO BE DONE?”**

The answer can strike fear in the hearts of CIOs, IT directors and application managers.

How often have you asked this question and gotten an answer you did not like? And then how often have you had to take that answer to the next management meeting to report that a heavily anticipated solution is still not ready for deployment?

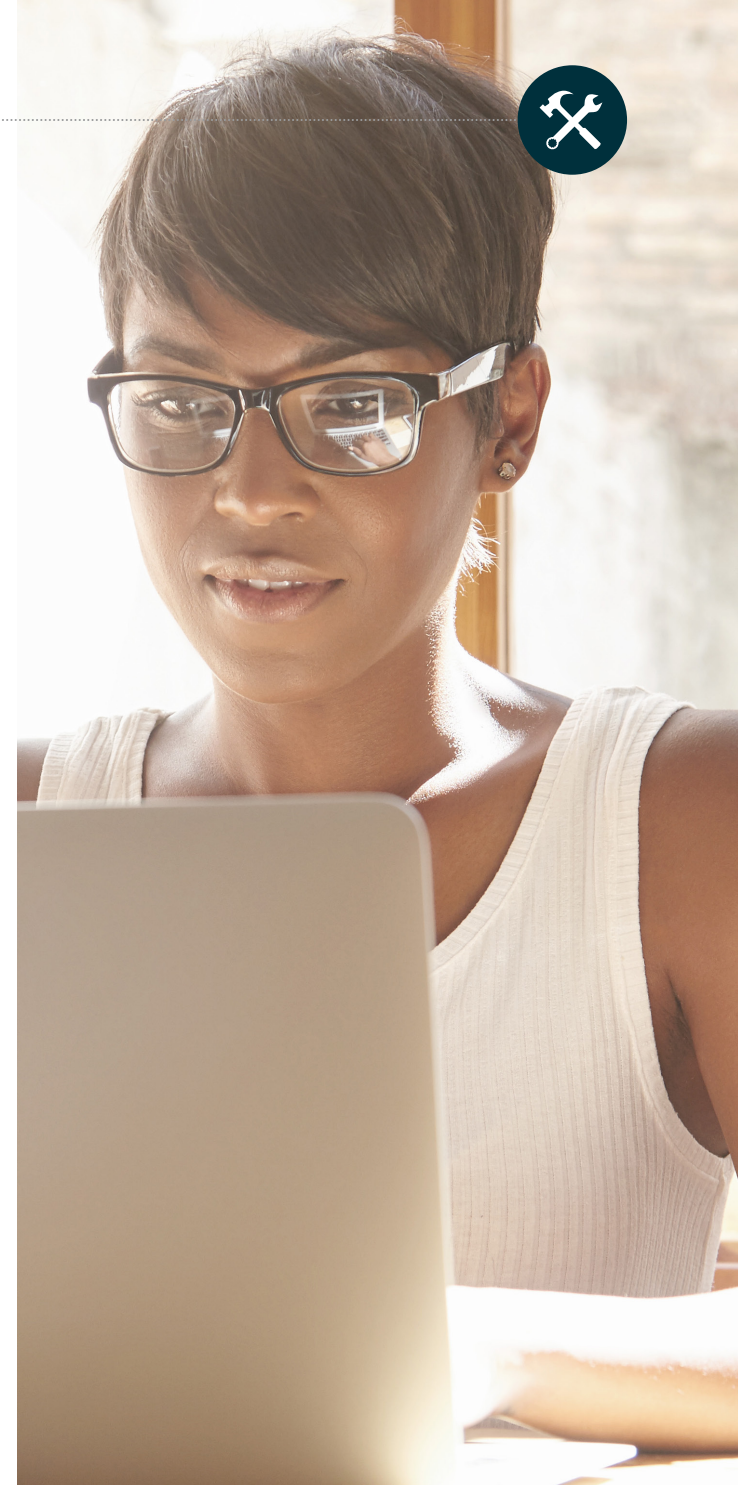
In my case, I was working on a custom-coded internal portal with neat things and no earthly way to move the project along any faster or guarantee completion by a certain date.

There was more than one lesson in this for me. And depending on how many of these moments you have had, you might be reluctant to consider an initiative with the word “transformation” in it. Because, while analysts and marketers paint amazing pictures of the benefits of digital transformation, it’s still up to you and your staff to persuade the funders, convince the agencies and actually deliver the solutions. Delivering has gotten much attention in the last few years as the complexity of solutions has led to long lead times and far-off go-live dates. Often, a perception that IT can’t deliver has led to independent and de-centralized purchasing of solutions by business units, adding to your work without consulting you about the implications of the purchase.



In our last blog, I talked about why I think “digital transformation” is essential for state government. The next challenge is determining how to invest wisely and ideally, using tools that don’t add to your workload. My experience taught me some lessons I can share while you consider which tools can make digital transformation more than an analyst fantasy.

With the right tools, you can not only “transform,” but consistently deliver. Changing your ability to deliver is the way to get back on track with your goals to centralize for better budget efficiency, modernize old systems and secure your infrastructure. And, it’s a way to rebuild your relationships with the departments, divisions and teams that may not have a positive outlook on IT’s ability to deliver.





**Code-free:** My story above is an example of what I needed to learn about relying on custom-coded solutions that take much longer than using a rapid application platform to manage content, data and processes. Being very clear in understanding how much functionality is available through configuration rather than code can help you better evaluate your investment with a realistic understanding of the work it takes to maintain and alter. Custom code makes it very difficult to predict completion and project timelines and government has a special need to understand how easy it is to adapt a solution, as our expectations and legal responsibilities can change with each political cycle. Custom code can inflate your costs, break when updates are needed and may not be very difficult to upgrade to reflect new functionality like a mobile or increased security.



**Integration tools:** The move to a content services environment recognizes that the storing of government data and the work of government staff are accomplished in dozens of solutions across the enterprise. Integration code, like custom code, can be a budget buster. But more importantly, a bad integration or complete lack of integration can impede staff efficiency, increase the amount of required training and even create duplicative data entry and manual work. Digital transformation implies efficiency gains for staff. It needs systems that work together to offer external customers convenient access while supporting internal staff with seamless access to the content they need to do their job. Understanding your integration tools and preferably having some options – like code-less integration, pre-built integrations and APIs – with consistent upgrades and updates to these tools will help you drive efficiency. It also helps capture information across the enterprise and serve it up in a content services model that advances your digital transformation.



**Case management platform:** One struggle unique to government is the sheer variety of programs, processes and data collection tasks going on across state government. Each program, funding type, funding agency, rule and regulation contributes to the number of solutions you may support. As we have moved from customer relationship management to customer experience and sought to empower staff through better information access, we learned to use a case management approach to enhance both of these moments. Now what we need for digital transformation is a case management platform that is low-code, built with an easy integration philosophy AND, critically, includes workflow automation tools and content access. Evaluating these qualities, looking for a case management platform and picking one that has rapid application development tools is perhaps the single most impactful step towards digital transformation. When you can deliver solutions that meet the unique challenges of state agency program delivery, do it in an agile way and be well-positioned to make changes when the political winds blow in a different direction. If you can do that, you'll re-define “deliver” for state government.





Consistently delivering solutions is the goal of every state IT effort. The roadblocks to this include many things - budget, lack of coordination, bad vendors - that may be out of your control. But we can choose wisely and demand tools and a platform that can drive today's transformation and accommodate tomorrow's needs, mandates and legal responsibilities. Considering the points above can help to put your effectiveness and ability to deliver back into your hands. ■

## PART 3: SUSTAIN

# KEEPING YOUR HERO STATUS IN THE POST-DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ERA





## EVER HAD THIS DREAM?

There's a rousing soundtrack, you walk into an agency and people throw confetti. There are grateful handshakes, the sounds of corks popping and a glass of celebratory champagne is pressed into your hand. In your office, a certificate signed by the Governor thanking you for leading your state's digital transformation sits atop your mail. You take a minute to admire the certificate and then you look at the top of the mail pile and one of your tech magazines has a cover screaming "If you don't have [fill in the blanks], you're already behind." The good feelings, the congratulations and possibly, the feelings of relief evaporate and you wake up in a cold sweat, with tightness in your chest.

Big but necessary IT projects are like this, except we seldom get a party at the end. And sometimes, the new systems are greeted with more opposition than appreciation. This makes our modernization and solution projects less than fun. And, with the wrong investment, the timeline for these projects creates a situation where the time between completion and the start of the next update/upgrade gets shorter and shorter.





## So, what if you want to be a hero? What if you want to be able to sustain the success of a good project?

In many ways, the path to digital transformation can lead you to sustainability because the tools that best drive transformation also position you to respond to new requirements, responsibilities, constituent needs and leverage technology developments. Here's some absolute necessities that can help you sustain your progress:

### Buy the platform that lets you move faster

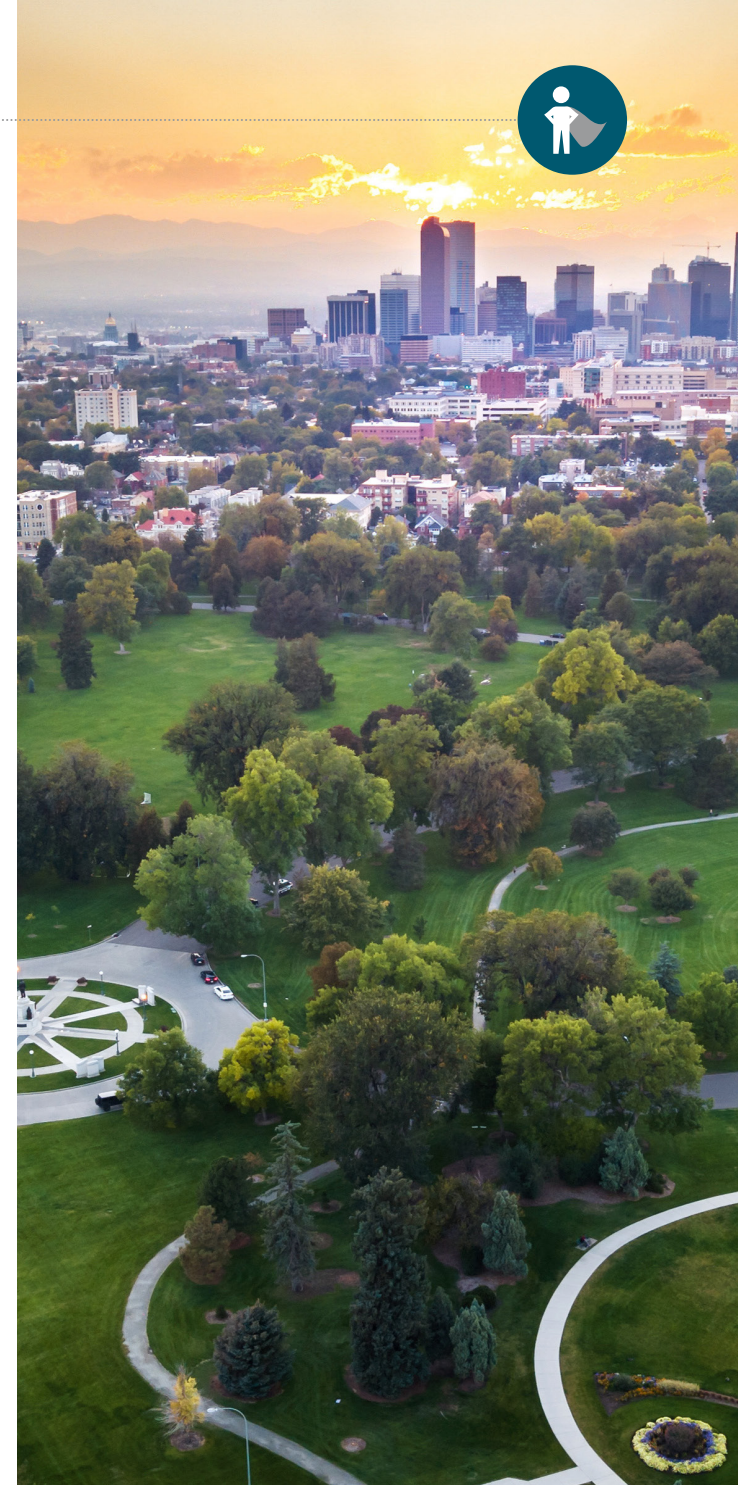
Rapid application development is essential, enabling you to provide necessary solutions faster.

### Invest in solutions with persistent and consistent updates and upgrades

Being able to depend on your vendor to watch for trends and continuously add features reduces how often you need to replace large systems due to lack of functionality and support.

### Take care of the staff training

Even if you outsource services and solution development, having resources to help staff understand the potential of your investments makes it easier to determine when to buy and when to develop within existing systems. When we purchase solutions we have to evaluate training, documentation and online forums as well as customer programs. This helps us see how we can sustain and update our staff understanding of our investments' capabilities.





Sustaining an IT department, your initiatives and your hero status is dependent on making smart IT investments and strong evaluations of the vendors that make them. To transform, deliver and sustain a great IT effort takes leadership, a little luck and a lot of good decision-making. ■

Now that you know some of the IT strategies and tools that have the most profound effect on digital transformation efforts, all that's left is to put that information into action. Whether that means putting together a plan to revamp your IT infrastructure or finding the right replacement for one system that brings processes to a crawl, you have the knowledge.





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