WHITEPAPER

Public sector, transformation and the tangible process of change

Everyone is talking about digital transformation.

And it seems as if they've been talking about it for a long time. It's true; it is a popular topic across industries and business of all sizes. Especially in the public sector where there is an ongoing drive to cut costs, streamline operations and ensure organisations are delivering on customer expectations, whether that is patients within the NHS, teachers and children within schools, or council communities.

This has been spurred by the establishment of Government Digital Services, which aim to drive the adoption of digital services within government. It came about as a result of the government's push to make digital the default option for departments. In the same vein, the G-Cloud framework was developed to give public sector bodies within government an easier way to take advantage of the cloud-first mentality.

What about the rest of the public sector? Is transformation necessary? Or is it just another buzzword? In such a fast-paced landscape, change is needed for organisations to remain relevant, retain customers and continue delivering the levels of service demanded by their customers.

For the public sector the drivers are more related to service outcomes and keeping customers happy. Research suggests that it's working – in the UK, 64% think the region is advanced in terms of digital development, but only 58% think that digital transformation has improved the quality of public services[1].

There are, as the research suggests, significant challenges, including budgets, spending cuts, legacy infrastructure and lack of skills. More than that, when it comes to digital transformation itself, there is a lack of understanding of what it means, what it entails and how to successfully implement it.

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[1] https://www.computerweekly.com/news/450432908/Citizens-want-more-from-public-sector-digital-transformation

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WHAT IS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION?

For some, digital transformation represents a very technically-orientated view of the world — using Office 365 to motivate your workforce, or moving servers off-premise and into the cloud. For others it is defined as a cultural transformation impacting the people within your organisation.

While emergent technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, bots, big data and Internet of Things (IoT), are disrupting all aspects of business and industry operations, embracing digital transformation requires a holistic approach to change that brings together all the elements and helps you re-engineer your organisation.

It's all about changes to technology, commercial and business strategies, the customer engagement approach, and perhaps most importantly cultural change. Regardless of industry or sector, digital transformation has to be driven from the top down. It is a leadership task that incorporates several critical components, including: creating a culture of digital transformation; accepting the idea of collaboration not competition; embracing fear (by providing strong leadership and having the right people); demonstrating value (this is as much about 'show' as it is 'tell'); respecting your ecosystem; and living agile.

MOVE PAST THE JARGON ONTO WHAT MATTERS

Digital transformation isn't a rebranding or marketing exercise (although that may be one component of any change); it's about re-engineering and rebuilding your organisation in the era of cloud, mobile, analytics and AI, all for the purpose of better interacting with your customers, who are themselves changing.

It isn't about moving to the cloud or embracing different technologies. Rather it is about enabling your organisation and your customers to be a part of the paradigm shift and benefit from the changing industry around them. Of course, technology is behind this, supporting it, but it is not the sole focus of transformation initiatives.

You have to get the right culture and change programme in place to unlock the value of technology and, most importantly, create a culture in which technology seamlessly forms part of the modus operandi of the business. Many organisations are struggling because they don't recognise the cultural changes required.

A majority also change their technologies, infrastructure and processes, but if you don't address the human elements of change then successful transformation is unlikely to happen.

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MAKING CHANGE TANGIBLE

Inevitably you can't talk about digital transformation without talking about technology. Whether you are a charity, government department or a school you are looking at your cloud strategy and the latest cloud technologies on offer, and considering how they may improve your operations, provide cost savings, create new services for your customers and so on.

Looking at the coming year, there are likely to be three main technology components of transformation to focus on: hybrid, security and compliance, and data transformation.

To put this into perspective, consider a private sector example: there have been many changes in the independent software vendor (ISV) market over the last few years. These businesses are moving away from traditional applications to embracing cloud and moving to software-as-a-service (SaaS) offerings. Why? Because ISVs identified that in order to survive and remain competitive, they had to move with the times. There is a lot more to SaaS enablement than merely changing product portfolios and technologies.

While this is a little different for the public sector, the core remains the same. There needs to be a significant shift in mindset, a cultural, as well as an operational change. This includes redeveloping the sales approach, retraining sales staff, adjusting to a new revenue and remuneration model, and ensuring compliance.

THREE KEY QUESTIONS

As a result, your approach to transformation should be shaped by answering three questions that guide the journey. What is the compelling business reason for digital transformation? What is the technology challenge that the organisation must comply with? And what technical solution can be put in place to solve it?

So how is this achieved? Taking the above example a step further, let's use an ISV active in the financial services industry as a starting point. With all the regulatory changes shaping the industry (like GDPR or PDS2) at the moment, the ISV needs to ensure the service it is providing is fully compliant with these regulations in order to still find a place in the market. That may mean looking at a hybrid solution — developing a modern hybrid application that is suitable for cloud consumption, while being compliant. For many ISVs their solutions are underpinned by databases and it is here where data transformation comes into play. The question then becomes how does the ISV take the data, consolidate it and make it useful in a modern application sense?

CONCLUSION

Transformation may not be inevitable for all organisations, but once there is a compelling reason to do so, then the journey must begin. It may not be a linear journey, and it won't be the same for all organisations, but its goal will be shared: digital transformation makes organisations more relevant, more competitive and improves the ways in which they engage with their customers. Ultimately, this helps the long-term sustainability and success of an organisation in a fast-changing environment where agility, compliance and customer focus are key.

WHY PULSANT

Pulsant is one of the UK's leading providers of hybrid cloud solutions with a core focus on private and public cloud services, transformation, security and compliance. Since its establishment in 1995, Pulsant has demonstrated tremendous growth and currently serves more than 4,000 customers — across the public and private sectors.

With a keen focus on helping organisations migrate to the cloud, optimise their technology investment and maximise the benefits of the technology in a secure and compliant way, Pulsant is ideally positioned to guide public sector organisations through their cloud journeys.

Pulsant is on the G-Cloud 10 framework, as well as the Hosting Services Framework for the Scottish government. The company has a wealth of experience in delivering hosting and IT consultancy services to public sector organisations across Scotland, England and Wales.

In keeping with Pulsant's focus on security and compliance, the company also holds a number of accreditations, including ISO27001, PCI DSS and BSI CSA Star for cloud security, and was awarded the Royal Warrant as a provider of hosted IT and datacentre services to the Royal household.

SOURCES

1. https://www.computerweekly.com/news/450432908/
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   transformation

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