

Four best practices from the Ministry of Justice Belgium

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The Ministry of Justice Belgium is on a mission to deliver faster, firmer, more human service - no small task when you take into account the breadth, depth, and complexity that not only defines the justice landscape, but also the case management nuances within it.

So, the team launched a composable case management platform on Salesforce. It gives the Ministry the modern, digital collaborative tools justice departments need to:

- Bring various sets of data and information together in a single, structured format
- Offer guided workflows configured to fit specific business rules
- Deliver that data and information in a 360-degree, digital case file

Then, they used it to deploy two purpose-built apps that introduced a new perspective and illuminated the power of change.

Peter Coussement, Senior Advisor to the Minister, and Jimmy De Laet, CIO, share four best practices from that work.

1. DEDICATE A TEAM TO FOCUS ON SPECIAL PROJECTS.

When the European government made funding available to digitize justice missions, the Ministry created a focused Digital Transformation Office (DTO) to support the European proposal to launch, among other projects, the judicial case management platform. This offers a couple of key benefits.

First, it's performative (yes, performative can be a strategic decision!). It shows executives, decision makers, and stakeholders alike that the work — or in this case, funding — is being taken seriously, actioned quickly, and put to good use. Second, it gives people clear goals and objectives so that they can drive change without taking away from the day-to-day work that still needs to continue simultaneously. Departments, agencies, and ministries (including justice) deliver essential programs and services that do not have the luxury of pausing while someone thinks through a new approach.

2. STAFF THAT TEAM WITH A MIX OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE EARNED EXPERIENCE.

"There are a number of prosecutors, judges, and clerks who quit their current job to start working for the Digital Transformation Office full-time. They provide perspective on which ideas are most likely to work based on real experience," said Coussement.

An experienced team brings a level of engagement that helps drive enhanced project outcomes, reduce risks, accelerate knowledge transfer, and streamline execution — all of which contributes to more meaningful service delivery outcomes.

It can also help crucially to create value for business stakeholders by using their knowledge and expertise to translate specific business needs to both IT consultants and to feedback IT requirements intelligibly to business stakeholders. They are the link that helps to get everyone on the same page and build a solution fit for purpose.

3. FIND COMMON GROUND AND BUILD ON IT.

Breaking down any silos from the start enables all stakeholder teams to identify common business needs, focusing on common functionality without losing sight of more focused needs by teams. "If you can get your business to define a large-scope common foundation for your application, not only is the build easier, but it also becomes more portable," shared De Laet.

A common base initiative can lead to more uniform, homogenic business processes across all business teams, maximizing your solution's usefulness without the need for customized solutions by team.

4. ALIGN BUSINESS AND IT.

Dedicated mixed project teams can also be used to bring people together through a fresh perspective and drive change. "The Digital Transformation Office brought together delegates from IT and the business, which has helped shape the project to be more inclusive and more actionable — not 'IT for IT's sake,'" said De Laet. "In a few years, when this project is complete, we will have a core group of people with the history, experience, and understanding to bring it into our scope of responsibility, helping us with new and existing projects without disrupting the business."

Collaborating with subject matter experts creates a positive feedback loop that reduces the need for customizations, matures product offerings, and helps everyone make the kind of educated, informed decisions that separate "idea" from "innovation." After all, something is only as innovative as it is creative, targeted, and relevant.

