

5 Best Practices from the California Department of Motor Vehicles.



The California Department of Motor Vehicles (CA DMV) is the largest identity issuer in the nation, managing IDs for more than more than 34 million people across 175+ field offices and 300+ kiosks across the state that have effectively doubled the DMV's community presence.

When the Director introduced a "digital first" initiative across all of the DMV's services with the goal of becoming the best retail organization in the country, the team took it one step further. "We also wanted to decentralize services and create an omni-channel experience for our customers where they can start a transaction on the web, finish it over a phone call or in a field office. Because that's the reality of how our customers engage. And to do that at the speed and scale of the CA DMV we needed a modern technology foundation in place that could support this work," said Ajay Gupta, Chief Digital Transformation Officer at the California DMV.

So, team members re-platformed the DMV's core systems, moving from on-premises and/or legacy IT systems to the Salesforce Government Cloud+ platform: (1) the contact center, (2) the case management system to virtual field office, and (3) drivers licenses (yes, it is here now!). This gave the team the ability to support and connect more services across more channels, all from one toolkit.

Gupta shares five best practices from that work.

1. BUILD FOR ELASTICITY.

"Going with SaaS was a strategic move on our part. It gave us the ability to reuse designs across multiple programs, and then connect them all on one platform supported by the same code. Up next is our driver safety program, and our investigations program. We keep adding to this platform like one might add layers to a cake," said Gupta.

This is what sets CA DMV's example apart as a true digital transformation compared to other IT efforts. Modernizing a given program or service is certainly necessary, but we are now entering a post-digital era where digital processes and operations are the new normal. This means customers are expecting more. Customers are expecting those digital services to be connected, to share information back and forth so that they don't have to repeat themselves, to move at the speed of AI. This is only possible if you digitally transform at the organization level.

2. LEAN ON SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS.

"A lot of DMVs use either custom-built or homegrown solutions. We went with software -- platform-as-a-service and software-as-a-service models -- because we want to focus on business transformation, not technology transformation," said Gupta.

Added benefits that come with this approach: updates and upgrades are pushed out to users automatically, reducing the amount of time teams have to spend patching their system. Data center resources are managed by the core technology vendor, not the government, freeing up budget for mission-critical work. Templates refined over time, based on the experience of other users, help you leapfrog the design and deployment process. Employees are empowered with the right information, which translates to a more connected customer experience.

3. MODERNIZE IN INCREMENTS.

"We took a modular approach which helped us act quickly. We worked in two and four-week sprints, and over time created a pretty rich portfolio of tools," said Gupta.

Again, there are added benefits here too. Sprint cycles / agile development methodology gives you the opportunity to roll out priority features, test those with users, and then incorporate their feedback immediately during the next cycle. The results: your product is more relevant, and people get a voice in the process, which tends to lead to faster adoption and stronger advocacy. They also receive new tools overtime, which helps them make an impact faster than if they were waiting for a "big reveal" moment. "A good plan today is often better than a perfect plan tomorrow," added Gupta.

4. ASK YOURSELVES QUESTIONS AS YOU GO.

"We asked ourselves a lot of questions throughout this journey: what do we do now and what do we save for a later cycle? In what ways can the platform scale? How are we going to sustain this? Do we need to reskill our employees? What policies are in place and should any of those change? We challenged the status quo constantly, which started by challenging our own thinking," said Gupta.



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5. TRANSFORM WHILE YOU WAIT FOR MODERNIZATION.

“Take inventory of what your employees and customers need now, and create a transition roadmap to create non-intrusive solutions around the legacy systems. Build a transition architecture toolkit supported by legacy connectors, task and process automation engines, intelligent document processing, AI powered virtual assistance, and ML-powered decision augmentation to serve the modern needs of the employees and customers. Borrow from outside the core industry on design patterns, use cloud and SaaS native features to jumpstart the technology to aid with the business transformation, and reuse the work towards the modernization effort,” said Gupta.

Read: Mr. Gupta is outlining not only the steps one should take if they are looking to transform a given program or service, but also the building blocks organizations need if they are going to stand up a Center of Excellence that has the potential to deliver impact enterprise-wide.

