STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT CIOs:

Addressing the Demand for Increased Resources and Bandwidth in IT Support Services

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State and local Chief Information Officers (CIOs) are challenged by resource constraints and tight budgets. It is for this reason that many CIOs are evaluating how they are allocating IT resources across support, service, and project work.

While CIO priorities, as chronicled by the National Association of State Chief Information Officers[1] (NASCIO), have remained fairly consistent over the last few years, we can expect to see priorities – at both the state and local levels – shift somewhat in the year ahead and beyond in a post-pandemic world.

For example, this seismic event exposed the need to further expand digital access, connectivity, and IT support services, and bolster or even rethink remote-work capabilities. These changes will introduce even more complexity and breadth to the CIO's role and responsibilities.

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[1] https://www.nascio.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/NASCIO_CIOTopTenPriorities.pdf
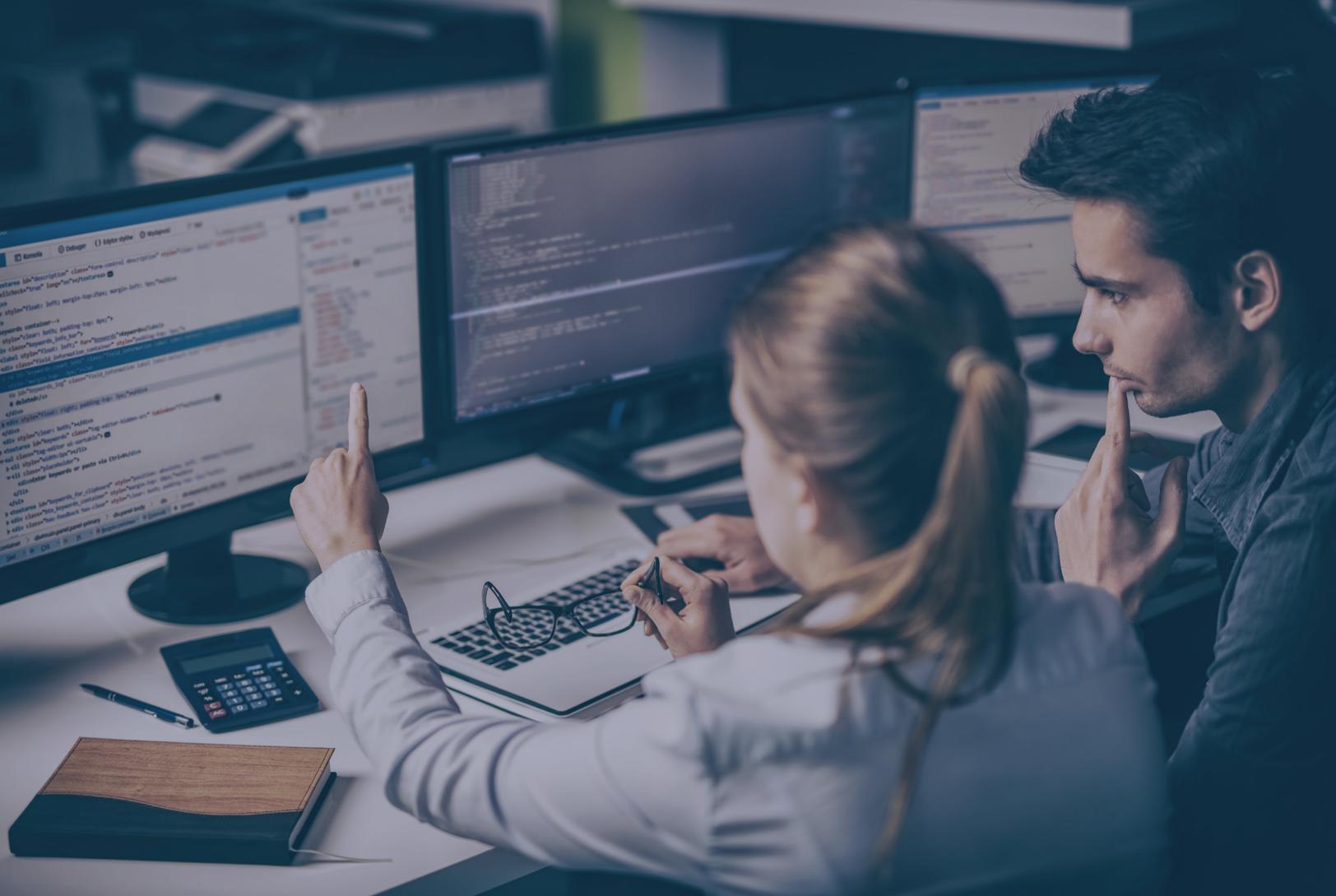
TIME TO RAISE THE BAR

Public sector organizations are at various stages of maturity with respect to IT service management and for many the gaps are widening quickly as IT is called to the front lines.

Areas under inspection include:

Self-service and knowledge sharing – how can end-users get information faster and easier?	Support for ITIL, including change management	Better control over project intake and governance

WHAT DOES IT SUPPORT SELF-SERVICE LOOK LIKE?

System end users – whether government employees or constituents – want to access information quickly, easily, and increasingly, without picking up the phone. Self-service support presents an attractive value proposition. Users can access information on demand, giving IT support resources more time to focus on other priorities.

There is a catch, however. Self-service options succeed only when information is accessible, complete, and actionable. For issues that require additional support, users must have the ability to submit a request quickly and get a response confirming receipt of the request and an expected timeframe for a response. Here are a few questions you can ask when looking to build a comprehensive self-service framework.

1. **Is it easy to use and navigate?** For starters, your portal should be welcoming to end users. It must be easy to navigate, include graphical elements (i.e., branding, etc.) that your users will recognize, and use jargon-free language to get your message across.

2. **Is it easy to modify and manage?** In terms of creating self-service portals, they should also be easy to build and easy to maintain, which means no specialized technical skills like coding or scripting should be necessary, and you shouldn't need dedicated resources to manage it.

3. **Are you able to quickly address the most asked questions?** With a highly configurable portal, you can be strategic in your efforts as well – first focusing on frequently asked questions and those issues that contribute to a high volume of incoming help desk tickets. Over time, you'll be able to grow and evolve your portal into a valuable resource that end users will learn to turn to first, freeing up the IT staff to focus on higher priority tasks and projects.

4. **Do you have an in-depth knowledge base with a feedback loop?** Along with being easy to navigate and written in the end users' own language, stellar portals also leverage a knowledge base (KB) that is highly indexed, provides quick links to the most accessed content, makes it easy to enhance content, and is accessible via mobile devices.

    The feedback loop happens when you introduce Knowledge Centered Service (KCS®)[2]. This practice relies on the notion that content is generated as problems arise. While KCS started in ITSM, it's now being adopted across the enterprise. KB articles are living assets that can be leveraged by both the users and technicians, which translates into a dramatic increase in first contact resolution (30%-50%)[2].

    KCS is an optimal framework to enable the delivery of accessible, complete, and actionable information. It fosters an organizational environment where information is continually developed based on requests, current knowledge exists in a meaningful way, and teams ultimately become more efficient.

    KCS prioritizes knowledge as a key organizational asset. As a framework, KCS can empower both internal and external stakeholders to seek answers to their questions autonomously, thus allowing better resource management internally, and higher constituent satisfaction. When an organization implements KCS, one of the most visible benefits is a reduction in the number of inbound requests – up to 70%[2], according to the KCS Academy.

    Integration and automation are key pieces of the KCS approach. IT teams should work to identify key processes and requests to automate – such as the creation of service tickets or automatically enabling access to folders or files for users with proper credentials – to further improve productivity and the user experience.

5. **Is it accessible with WCAG 2.0 AA compliance?** When creating a portal, it is important to be as accessible as possible, meaning it should be WCAG 2.0 AA/508 compliant[3]. Not only should the site be easy to navigate, but it should also be made available to everyone.

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2   https://www.thekcsacademy.net/kcs/
3   https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/communications-and-it/about-the-ict-refresh/background/comparison-table-of-wcag2-to-existing-508-standards

TAKE A PAGE FROM THE ITIL PLAYBOOK

As CIOs look to advance their organizations along the project management maturity curve, they should consider the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL)[4], a framework of best practices for IT service management.

The current iteration of ITIL, version four, contains nine guiding principles[5], covering organizational change management, communication and measurement, and metrics. ITIL is not organization specific – the fundamental idea is to integrate the processes and procedures with the organization's strategy. The best approach is one where an organization crawls, then walks, then runs. The idea is to build a strong foundation by first focusing on specific acute pain points and then showing measurable impact.

By identifying specifically how ITIL will help and getting the appropriate buy-in, organizations raise their odds for successful implementation. When leveraged effectively, ITIL can lead to reduced IT costs, more efficient IT services, and improved satisfaction – results that benefit any government organization.

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4   https://www.axelos.com/best-practice-solutions/itil
5   https://www.axelos.com/certifications/itil-certifications/itil-practitioner-level

PRIORITIZE CHANGE MANAGEMENT

According to Prosci's Best Practices in Change Management 2018 study[6], 93% of participants that had excellent change management programs in place met or exceeded project objectives. In contrast, only 15% of those with poor change management programs met or exceeded project objectives.

The bottom line: projects rarely succeed in the absence of robust change management strategies. Not only does effective change management help ensure projects meet their objectives, it also increases the chances of a project staying on schedule and coming in on or under budget. Unfortunately, this critical element of project management is often given only cursory attention.

Implementing a strong change management program starts from the top down and should be integrated into a program from its inception through completion. CIOs and other leadership must fully embrace it and communicate its importance openly and clearly to their teams.

6   https://blog.prosci.com/the-correlation-between-change-management-and-project-success

MAKE THE PMO YOUR OWN

Increasingly, state and local government CIO offices are owning the project management office (PMO). This is a logical evolution due to the high volume of project requests that require IT team resources for execution. It, therefore, is prudent that the CIO office serve as a primary gatekeeper for projects and the resources needed to support them.

According to the 2020 Pulse of the Professional Survey[7], the Project Management Institute's (PMI) annual global survey, organizations that undervalue project management as a strategic competency for driving change report an average project failure rate of nearly 70%. In an environment in which stakes are high and resources are stretched increasingly thin, public sector CIOs must embrace and deploy best-practice project management strategies. Embracing this approach, CIOs can optimize resources and laser-focus on advancing the most important projects to improve efficiency and overall outcomes.

The key to launching a successful PMO is tailoring the role and structure of the office to address the organization's most pressing project management challenges. The office should address those areas first and can then expand and evolve its scope as the organization moves up the project management maturity curve. For example, if the greatest challenge is balancing and allocating resources, a CIO might start by instituting a formalized intake and governance process as the foundation for the PMO. The intake process should define how requests should arrive at the PMO, what information a team must submit as part of the proposal process, and how the review team evaluates, prioritizes, and approves projects. The CIO should consider creating a project review committee, with representation from administration, line managers, and IT team members to review and evaluate all proposed projects. As a baseline, the governance process should include milestones and measurement of project status. Some organizations may require a formalized monthly or quarterly project review. Others, might simply require a high-level dashboard that communicates project status with a simple red, yellow, green alert. Visibility across incoming and in-progress projects is the foundation for an effective PMO.

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7   https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/forging-future-focused-culture-11908

SECRET TO SUCCESS: SINGLE IT SERVICE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM

Best practices cannot stand alone – they must be integrated and managed throughout the project lifecycle. Visibility into resources, schedules, budgets, and milestones is also essential – at both the project and portfolio levels.

How can state and local CIOs make the most of best practices and gain the insight that they need to bring new levels of discipline, efficiency, and success into their growing portfolios? The key to success is a solid foundation – an integrated platform that includes both Project Portfolio Management (PPM) and IT Service Management (ITSM) that enables seamless work management across projects, project portfolios, and tickets – ensuring visibility and resource optimization throughout the organization. A consolidated view of service work, operations work, and projects allows those executing tasks to work efficiently, while enabling better decision making on resource allocation from the top down.

An integrated platform also makes it easier for those doing the work. Teams will have more time to spend on the projects themselves, versus updating and tracking tasks in multiple, disparate platforms – an approach that is expensive and introduces opportunity for error.

TAKING THE NEXT STEPS

State and local government CIOs continue to see their mission and job responsibilities grow unchecked. Unfortunately, the resources at their disposal have not increased commensurately. In this environment, CIOs and their teams must work smarter even as they work harder. Best practices supported and enabled by an integrated project portfolio management and IT service management platform sets the stage for unprecedented project and mission success.

Learn more and gain an understanding of how many state and local governments have already benefitted from using a single platform for project portfolio management and IT service management:

https://www.teamdynamix.com/tdx-for-public-sector

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