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Boosting Civic Engagement in a Tech-Savvy World:

Why digital transformation is non-negotiable





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Digital adoption in government: a brief history

Let's think back to 2020 for a moment. As the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic rapidly spread worldwide, it upended centuries of government traditions that relied on access to public buildings and meetings. Overnight, local and state governments were forced to adapt so they could continue serving their communities remotely.

In the face of unprecedented change, US residents looked to their local governments for advice, making strong communication methods more crucial than ever. Fortunately, that requirement paved the way for digital transformation within government organizations – an evolution that was long overdue.

Fast forward to today and the demand for digital channels hasn't diminished. With smartphones playing a ubiquitous role in most residents' lives, they favor more modern and convenient ways of connecting with their local governments. As the pandemic proved, government organizations are capable of being agile and embracing modern ways of working, so there's no turning back. Gone are the days where constituents will accept stacks of manual paperwork, hard-to-navigate websites and inconvenient meetings.

Still, 2020 was just the beginning of rapid digital transformation. Technology grows increasingly sophisticated all the time, so governments can't afford to rely on antiquated legacy systems to meet their constituents' high expectations. Agencies that ignore the need to modernize will struggle to keep their communities engaged, putting them at a serious disadvantage. So, to maximize civic engagement levels and maintain resilience for the future, you must stay ahead of the digital curve.

IN THIS GUIDE, WE'LL TAKE A LOOK AT THE FOLLOWING:

- Why digital transformation is vital for local and state governments
- The advantages of digital adoption in government
- The role of the IT leader in digital transformation
- How to implement a civic engagement platform

Read on to learn more about how technology can empower you to create better lives for the people you serve.

Why is digital transformation vital for state and local governments?

Undeniably, civic engagement is at the core of democracy. However, for a democracy to truly represent every resident, it must be diverse and inclusive of all demographics. Yet, without accessible information, communication methods and participation opportunities, large groups of people will go underrepresented and certain issues will continue to be overlooked.

Learning what the community's priorities are requires a decent voting turnout, which is impossible to achieve if your residents are unengaged. Although so much information is now available at our fingertips, civic engagement has hit an all-time low in many areas because of the government's reluctance to adopt technology. People have become accustomed to the multiple, on-demand channels of communication that the B2C market popularized in recent years, and governments are falling behind.

The problem is, with no choice but to use inadequate feedback from a small demographic, governments risk making poorly-informed decisions that can cause severe reputational damage in the long run. So, now is the time to embrace modern technology and connect with your residents in a more innovative, inclusive and convenient way. By implementing the right platform, you can enjoy a spike in civic engagement, represent every member of your community, and set the stage for a better future.

In addition to improving civic engagement levels, governments must also consider how they will navigate periods of uncertainty and change in the coming years. If the pandemic taught us anything, it's that we must use technology to our advantage so that any operational disruption is minimized.

With a recession looming across the US, local and state governments will be under enormous pressure to cut costs without compromising on the quality of service delivery.

Governments won't be able to rely on primitive legacy systems if they are to meet those requirements. Luckily, modern technology gives you the power to automate processes, reduce workloads and impress residents simultaneously. In the next section, we'll explore some of the main ways a suitable platform can benefit your organization and your constituents.



The advantages of digital adoption in government

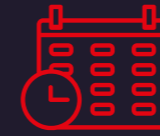
As we touched on in the last section, technology is the key to boosting civic engagement. Nonetheless, it's worth noting that simply running a social media account or making small updates to your website won't impress residents who have come to expect seamless, consistent digital experiences across multiple channels.

As such, government organizations should look to implement a dedicated civic engagement platform, which is specifically designed to deliver excellent user experiences and encourage residents to become more involved in their communities.

To illustrate, the City of Olathe in Kansas sought to develop more innovative ways to serve its residents through digital transformation. Their reliance on archaic legacy systems was holding them back,

so they implemented Granicus, a government-specific civic engagement platform. Between 2017 to 2021, their subscribers shot up by 2,660% and annual site traffic skyrocketed to 2.1 million visitors, demonstrating that their residents were more engaged as a result of the new technology.* And, with the platform constantly recording such insightful data, Olathe's government is now able to use the results of each campaign to make better decisions based on their residents' needs.

Aside from improving civic engagement, a purpose-built platform can also provide a whole host of other benefits, including:



MORE TIME: Clunky legacy systems require lots of maintenance, especially when they stop working unexpectedly. In contrast, a reliable civic engagement platform requires much less attention, liberating your employees' time to focus on more pressing tasks. Furthermore, civic engagement platforms enable more resident interactions to take place digitally, reducing the requirement for in-person meetings or lengthy phone calls.



MORE MONEY: Legacy system maintenance isn't free. And, as the years go by, you can expect more issues to begin cropping up. With a civic engagement platform, you won't be caught off guard with any expensive surprises as it uses the most state-of-the-art technology to keep everything running like clockwork.



BETTER REPUTATION: When it comes to running a successful government organization, reputation is everything. Unfortunately, outdated legacy systems that don't always work as they should can cause your residents to become frustrated and, at worst, lose trust in you. A civic engagement platform eliminates technical difficulties and delayed updates by adopting the latest technology, making it easier for residents to get what they need when they need it.



BETTER SERVICES: As a government organization, you're under significant pressure to continuously improve service delivery, but that's easier said than done when your budget is limited. Investing in a civic engagement platform is the first building block to improving your services on a budget. You can stamp out inefficiencies, streamline your workflow and meet residents' expectations in an increasingly digital world.



MORE STRAIGHTFORWARD AND INCLUSIVE INITIATIVES: An unengaged constituency makes your job harder than it needs to be. That's where a civic engagement platform comes in. By providing your people with the necessary information via convenient channels, they'll be more invested in their community and provide you with the feedback you need to succeed.

Evidently, modernizing your civic engagement strategy doesn't just benefit your residents. Government organizations that undergo digital transformation can expect their efforts to become more productive and yield a higher return on investment.



The role of the IT leader in digital transformation

It's no secret that modernization comes with a unique set of challenges, such as retiring legacy systems, educating constituents on new platforms, reskilling or hiring staff, and updating internal processes. For busy government organizations, these hurdles can be overwhelming and – in some cases – entirely off-putting.

The good news is, they don't have to be. For digital transformation to be successful, governments will need to lean on the expertise of their IT leaders to guide the entire process – from scoping and project planning to implementation and ongoing support.

Having one person at the helm ensures that the project runs smoothly towards a single long-term vision without eating up time that your employees could better spend on serving the public.

Nevertheless, the IT leader can't do everything alone. Gathering insights on end-user needs and understanding the challenges that non-technical staff encounter when using internal systems will inform a large part of the strategy. Only then can you learn what the main priorities are and look for suitable ways to address them.

If your agency has depended on the same legacy systems for a long time, there's a good chance your list of fixes will be extensive. With so many issues to tackle, it may be tempting to purchase a monolithic solution that can seemingly solve all your problems. But, such solutions can take years to implement, by which point, your civic engagement levels will have continued to plummet.

Instead, it should be up to the IT leader to procure a solution that they can implement quickly and expand upon as needed. For example, you may begin with a service, such as building permits, that you can develop further down the line. An added advantage to this gradual method is that you'll learn lessons from each launch, which you can then use to make better-informed decisions in the future that make your residents feel valued and heard.



Implementing a civic engagement platform

For government organizations to continue keeping their residents happy and engaged in a post-pandemic world, digital transformation is non-negotiable.

However, technology isn't a silver bullet. It's not enough to simply purchase a solution and expect to see positive changes; you must pay close attention to the needs of your organization and community, and use technology as a tool to address them.

Remember, not all technologies are built equally so it's worth taking some time to do your research. As we mentioned earlier, investing in a purpose-built civic engagement platform for governments, like Granicus, will yield the results you're looking for. By choosing a comprehensive platform, implementation will be more seamless and will require less tailoring, meaning you can continue doing what you do best: serving your residents.

Just as important as making the decision to invest in new technology is the consideration of the implementation process. We've put together some helpful steps to get you started:

- 1 Consider how you can optimize existing workflows
- 2 Decide how you will measure success
- 3 Plan how you will communicate the changes with stakeholders
- 4 Determine if you have people with the right skills and training on your team
- 5 Identify potential issues before rollout and rectify them
- 6 Gather feedback from your community via surveys and beta tests

Now you're aware of the many ways a civic engagement platform can benefit your organization and constituents, are you ready to get started?

Join Granicus: The platform trusted by more than 5,500 US government agencies

Wouldn't it be great if civic engagement was simpler? With Granicus, it is.

Granicus is the first and only civic engagement platform designed specifically for government. We enable government agencies to transform how they connect with the public through a unified experience that integrates website, online services, digital communications, and more.

Government teams work more efficiently and provide better services with Granicus solutions that revolutionize residents' journeys, reaching and serving each resident equally and inclusively. Better still, you don't need any technical skills or coding experience. With this no and low-code solution, your staff can create rapid updates without relying on third parties to make changes.

Users of the Granicus Civic Engagement Platform can take advantage of five powerful solutions that are designed to help you meet the needs of your community:

- **govMeetings:** Ensure public meetings run smoothly, increase internal efficiency, and document decisions proficiently so policymaking is open and available.
- **govAccess:** Transform your website into a modern platform that offers digital services, forms and signatures, online payments, and more.
- **govDelivery:** Reach and engage more people with the most trusted marketing platform for government.
- **govService:** Go fully digital with an online form builder, digitize any service, streamline workflows and eliminate the headaches that come with PDFs.
- **govRecords:** Minimize paper-based processes, reduce lines and wait times, and easily maintain compliance with user-friendly online tools.



See for yourself

Granicus empowers modern civic engagement like never before. But, don't just take our word for it. Schedule a **free demo** today and discover how we can help your organization.



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