Modern services for a modern world
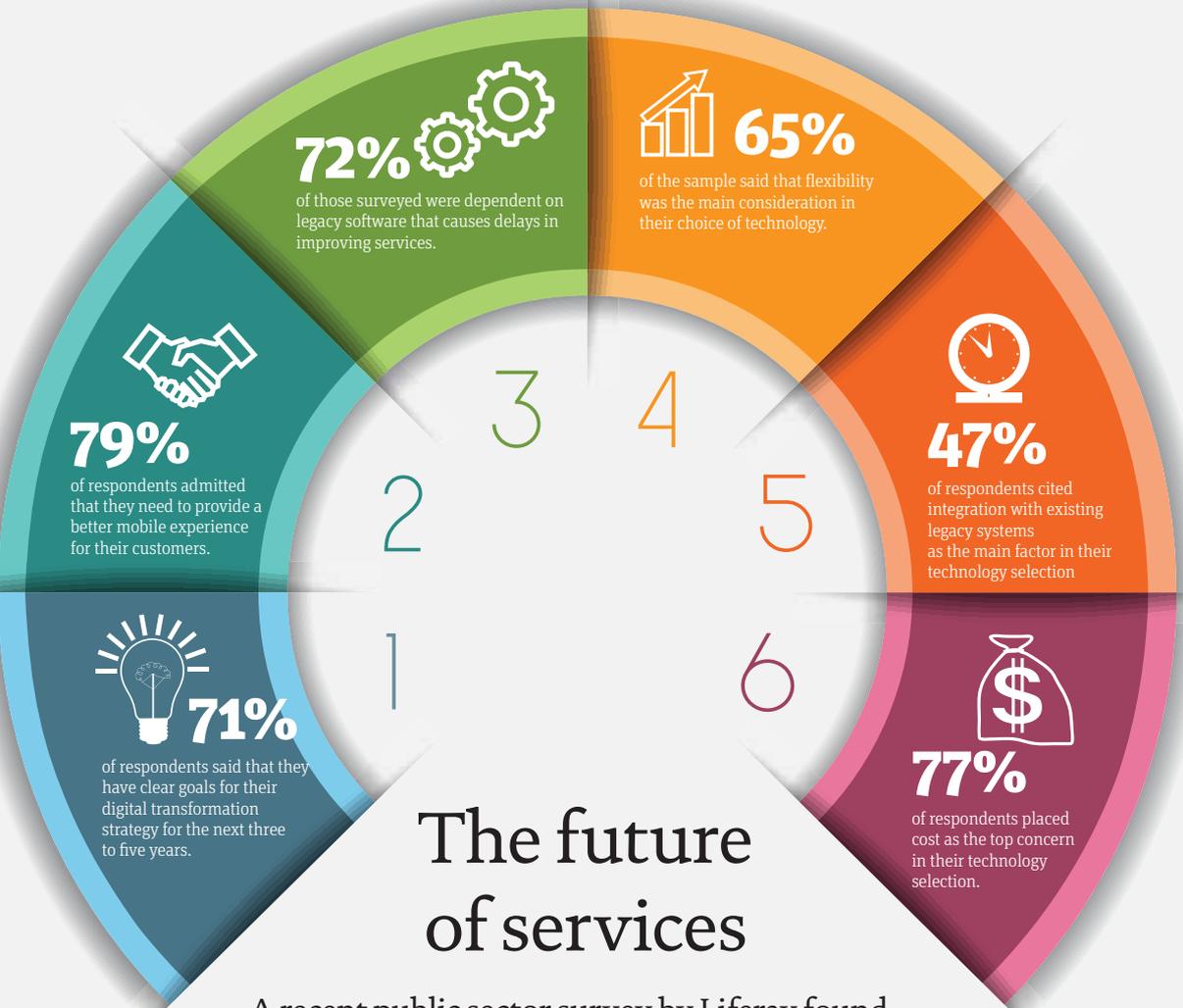
Can digital transformation enhance the public sector?

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BY THE NUMBERS

72% of those surveyed were dependent on legacy software that causes delays in improving services.

65% of the sample said that flexibility was the main consideration in their choice of technology.

79% of respondents admitted that they need to provide a better mobile experience for their customers.

47% of respondents cited integration with existing legacy systems as the main factor in their technology selection

71% of respondents said that they have clear goals for their digital transformation strategy for the next three to five years.

77% of respondents placed cost as the top concern in their technology selection.

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The future of services

A recent public sector survey by Liferay found…

Using technology to empower the public sector

Digitalisation can cultivate more efficient and effective public services, writes Mary McKenna, co-founder of Learning Pool and non-executive director at MYGOV

Imagine a place where the wider public sector, its employees, stakeholders, suppliers and citizens were seamlessly connected across boundaries and countries in a frictionless way through technology. Imagine how much time, money and frustration government bodies and their many agencies could save if they could collaborate efficiently and share data effectively, and citizens could access information from a single source and self-serve.

Imagine if every individual local authority, health provider and even charity in the world didn't pay for unique technology builds, from scratch over and over again, and could access affordable platforms that have been built in partnership with the sector that they serve. Imagine a world where technology realised a genuine stretch in the public purse. An online global community where the topics of the day, be they related to smart cities or social care or the future of education, could be discussed and resolved and done so with citizens' needs driving solution design.

Maybe it's a virtual place, a digital place, where as I start to type a question the environment through machine learning and artificial intelligence suggests to me other people outside of my immediate network that I may wish to connect with or direct my question at,

or offers me relevant content that I can easily squirrel away into my own private space, or offers me a "better" version of the question I'm asking along with a well-considered answer. This was a world I used to dream about when I scaled my first technology company in the public sector online learning space and it's the dream I bought into years ago when I joined the original Knowledge Hub team.

As part of our evolution to MYGOV and with the help of our partners at Liferay and AWS, and the vision of our collaborators and customers such as the Improvement Service in Scotland and the Cabinet Office, we are fast realising that global dream. The great news is that much of what I've described already exists. In the month of June alone we had more than 2,500 brand new people register for a Knowledge Hub account, 40 requests from organisations seeking to establish new groups and 50,000 unique visitors generating over 1.1m page impressions.

We were also delighted to commence our support of the city of Salvador in Brazil, as we help them engage partners and citizens in important community initiatives as part of 100 Resilient Cities – pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation.

Someone once said of me that if you cut me open, I would bleed public sector; so for me our ultimate outcome is to build a digital place that gives our members the opportunity to do something great for themselves, the communities they serve and for their sector, and to find other like-minded people that have the same ambitions. Why not join us?
For more information, please visit: www.khub.net

Citizens engaged: how people can realise the potential of technology

Public services must be responsive to evolving consumer needs and understand how technology can cut costs, according to Michael MacAuley, general manager at Liferay UK & Ireland

From 2001, not long after the first proper websites appeared for public organisations in the United Kingdom, I spent 12 years fighting the good fight and championing the use of web technologies. Having been through a time when the use of these tools was viewed with significant scepticism, to a time when they are seen as essential to the delivery and preservation of services, I'm more than a little interested in the use of technology in service delivery and how my erstwhile colleagues are getting on.

While transformation in private firms is all about customer acquisition and market share, public organisations are more often motivated by different drivers. Back in 2014 at Liferay UK, we began a series of papers looking at the history and challenges of digital transformation in the public sector in the UK.

This was followed by a study in 2016 of the state of play with this work across public sector organisations. Most recently, we have refreshed this research with a further study (of 367 people) aiming to understand the concerns, direction of travel and sentiment of those involved in this work.

Why did we conduct the study?
Well firstly, because I'm very curious about how things have changed since I moved sectors. I like to baseline my thinking and see how things have changed. Broadly, the study sought to:
▌ Gain insight into the digital transformation journey of public sector organisations.
▌ Understand the core concerns of the teams and leaders in question.
▌ Better understand the goals and objectives of the public sector digital strategy.

What has changed?
Two years ago, the picture was very much of organisations in the early stages of service transformation. Today, the picture is very different. Over 70 per cent of respondents

say that they have clear goals for the next three to five years. The emphasis has shifted from organisational outcomes, to the citizen or customer. Making services more accessible (63 per cent), changing how people interact with those services (46 per cent) and providing consistent customer experiences are the main objectives now. Seventy-nine per cent of people surveyed admit they need to provide a better mobile experience to their customers.

The obstacles remain the same

The hurdles remain consistent. Organisational change stays the number one challenge with cost and legacy considerations second and third again. These are common themes and come up again and again in every conversation with public sector colleagues.

While organisational change is about organisational development, cost and legacy are impacted significantly by technology choices. Cost has become a major focus for 77 per cent of those surveyed (compared to just 28 per cent in 2016). Legacy integration has jumped from 25 per cent to 47 per cent, and flexibility to meet future customer needs, which did not figure a couple of years ago, is a serious concern for some 65 per cent of those responding.

Aspirational goals

Many saw that the use of advanced digital platforms, Digital Experience Platforms (DXPs), would allow them to better analyse their citizen data, collect feedback, and understand their needs better. Personalisation is one way in which organisations offer better digital journeys, and a more efficient interaction with services, reducing waste and driving channel shift. "Our citizens want to access council services 24-7," explains Tracy Dodds, digital services manager at Bristol City Council. She adds: "We have a big squeeze on our budget so part of the solution is providing digital self-service."

Gavin Beckett, chief innovation and research officer at Perform Green Limited, says: "I think what we are looking from suppliers is an understanding that we need infrastructure and technology that supports change and supports flexibility, because our services are not going to look the same when we have transformed them as they do now."

What is the situation today?

Cost savings remain a key motivator and channel shift is the primary way to achieve this (43 per cent) with cost-effective technology seen as a vital element in that mix. But what does "cost-effective" mean in this context? Total cost of ownership or TCO is about the whole picture, not just the immediate one.

What stayed the same?

❙ Customer experience is still a top priority along with making services more accessible.
❙ Cost still remains a top concern (77 per cent).
❙ Integration with legacy still remains a key factor when deciding on technology for transformation. Its importance has grown (47 per cent) as the transformation journey extends to LOB systems and transactional experiences.
❙ Flexibility to meet future needs is still a top factor in determining technology for the transformation process (65 per cent).
❙ Digital self-service is still seen as the primary method for achieving cost savings.

Conclusion

The pace of change in delivery of any service is the key factor. What's clear is that technology will not solve problems for you. It can only support employees, organisations and citizens or customers in achieving their goals. It's the commitment of all actors that makes the difference and tying your organisation to one solution is neither wise nor practical.

What is required are solutions that are open to both the past and the future. That can work together with legacy and keep options open for future requirements. That allows line of business systems to be developed quickly in response to requirements and equip IT for the task of hiding the complexity from users.

Digitalised data bases translate to swifter actions and knowledge exchange, explains **Mike McLean**, knowledge and collaboration manager at Improvement Service

Creating a network for ideas

Councils and other public sector bodies are attempting to deliver better services and have a positive impact on people's lives with fewer resources. We're bringing thousands of workers together to help them do that. As the Improvement Service (IS) for local government in Scotland, we help councils and their partners to improve the health, quality of life and opportunities of all people through community leadership, strong local governance and the delivery of efficient local services.

From our beginnings, we've been advocates of bringing together people from across the public and voluntary sectors to help each other plan, deliver and improve services. The IS is working now with MYGOV to offer all Scottish public service organisations access to a trusted digital place, Knowledge Hub, and to support them in its use.

As an early adopter of Knowledge Hub we've witnessed and helped shape and evolve its development from a means of bringing local authorities together to the place to go for anyone working across public services.

Knowledge Hub is the United Kingdom's largest public service collaboration platform where currently 160,000 people working across public services go to exchange knowledge, experiences and ideas on how to improve services, and create connections with peers and experts in a secure environment. Our users can share and discuss ideas, enhance their individual expertise and be inspired to develop more innovative ways of working.

Knowledge Hub at work
The public sector can be a complex landscape to navigate and coordinating diverse groups of stakeholders around a particular theme can be challenging.

Knowledge Hub is helping us improve services locally and nationally by bringing these groups together and driving positive change.

For instance, during the recent implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation, councils in Scotland saved more than £1m by jointly working to a Readiness Plan designed by the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government. The councils used Knowledge Hub to share learning and to find common answers to challenges. The Digital Office said this has helped to sizably reduce any duplication of effort and ensure a consistent approach between councils in the Local Government Digital Partnership.

The Change Managers Network gives local authorities a place to share good practice and facilitate discussion on change. The group has been going for over three years now and supports over 600 members within councils across Scotland and beyond, who now have a recognised digital place to get fast answers and support from colleagues regardless of location.

The Violence Against Women (VAW) network supports VAW partnerships in preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls at a local level. The network brings together VAW partnership co-ordinators and other key stakeholders, such as Scottish Government, COSLA, local authorities, third-sector organisations and Police Scotland.

The Knowledge Hub group has become a central communication tool for the network's members and has positively impacted how members collaborate. For example, when developing a position paper on commercial sexual exploitation, members used Knowledge Hub as a space for discussion about what the paper should include, sharing examples of work their council had undertaken. Members highlight how useful the group is for sharing ideas and engaging with colleagues, with one member noting how useful it is that a member can log on to the Knowledge Hub group "knowing that you can ask a question and there is a good chance that someone will be in a position to give advice."

The Dundee Advice Workers Forum has used Knowledge Hub to modernise the way that advice workers engage day-to-day and improve support for frontline workers. This online community created a new way of working by facilitating knowledge exchange, making it easy to network and collaborate, providing access to a range of skills and expertise. The community discovered that the more you use Knowledge Hub, the more it learns about you and your interests, and will suggest contents, groups and connections of relevance to you.

Why use Knowledge Hub?

TO DISCOVER KNOWLEDGE TO HELP YOU DO YOUR JOB:
▐ **Keep up to date with current thinking.**
▐ **Enhance skills and expertise.**
▐ **Compare and share information and data.**

TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND EXPERTS TO NETWORK WITH:
▐ **Develop and retain specialist knowledge.**
▐ **Share what works with others.**
▐ **Network and collaborate with peers.**

TO SAVE TIME AND MONEY:
▐ **Have global conversations from your desk.**
▐ **Save hours of research time by learning from others.**
▐ **Pool resources.**

TO GENERATE AND INCUBATE IDEAS TO DRIVE IMPROVEMENT:
▐ **Inspire innovation.**
▐ **Create new ways of working.**
▐ **Learn from leaders in your field.**

TO RAISE YOUR PROFILE AND THAT OF YOUR ORGANISATION:
▐ **Get in touch with new and existing customers.**
▐ **Build relationships.**
▐ **Develop customer insight.**

THE PHOTO TEAM

DIGITAL PLACE

Growing new places for local digital services

collaborate **with** COMMUNITY

experiment **with** SERVICE

accelerate **with** KNOWLEDGE

grow **with** PLACE

The fastest way to bring your digital ideas to life is in your own DIGITAL PLACE.

DIGITAL PLACE is a new local service ecosystem that's built and ready to bring your digital ideas to life. By placing your customers at the centre of your digital transformation we make it easy for you to grow your new digital services environment around real people and the places they live and work.

We think digital is best when it grows organically, and not pre-designed. So we help you create a living, growing ecosystem of inter-connected services all working together for your Digital Place.

Now you can collaborate, engage and serve your customers immediately, bringing you meaningful local results right from the start.

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