Flanders
State of the Art

Flemish Government streamlines service to citizens

DXC Technology platform reduces administration to save citizens €97 million a year

Objective
Improve services by introducing e-government to increase efficiencies and reduce costs

"The total investment we have made in MAGDA each year is €2 million but it is producing annual savings to citizens of €97 million which is an excellent Return on Investment."

– Hans Arents, advisor on e-government strategy and program management for Co-ordination Cell Flemish e-Government (CORVE)

Approach

After an overall assessment and roadmap, the Flemish Government realized it needed to reinvent how it used technology, transitioning from a 'pull' to a 'push' model of information exchange

IT Matters

- Creates efficiencies through standardization of processes, virtually eliminating data duplication and human error

- Transfers data automatically, using electronic ID (e-ID) cards for authentication of citizens

- Ensures citizen privacy and data security by controlling information access, storing data separately and filtering out data where necessary

Business Matters

- Saves citizens €97 million a year against costs of €2 million a year giving a great Return on Investment

- Will digitize applications for planning permission which is predicted to save €3 million a year and halve citizens' costs

- Makes life easier for the citizens of Flanders and creates an example that other countries may follow

- Digitizes 42 million paper transactions annually to reduce cost and support the environment

Flemish Government asks citizens for information only once

Citizens of Flanders were repeatedly asked to provide the same information when they applied for various government services, leading to wasted effort, high cost and data duplication. The Flemish Government decided to ask for information just once then make it available to various departments through a common e-government back-end platform. DXC Technology specialists helped build this data exchange platform based on Service Oriented Architecture (SOA).

Challenge

Eliminating data duplication

Six million residents of Belgium are Flemish and with 70 different government agencies, the Government of Flanders was repeatedly asking citizens to supply the same information when applying for a wide variety of services, from benefit payments and college grants to bus passes and building planning permissions.

To streamline the process, the government decided to collect the information just once and then make it available to all layers of government. Not only would this make life easier for citizens, it would reduce the amount of time taken to collect and verify information, would do away with hundreds of paper forms and would eliminate lost or duplicated data. It would also simplify an unwieldy data collection process, avoiding conflicts which often occurred when the same information was collected from more than one source.

Officials on both business and IT sides agreed that e-government was the way forward and that they should take a holistic approach. Rather than merely digitizing all existing paper-based processes, they decided to completely re-think and even eliminate some processes altogether. To do this they had to rework the whole back office infrastructure. The plan was to achieve immediate and proactive service delivery by creating a common web services platform for exchanging data between administrations.

€97

million annual savings to citizens from MAGDA project

"We realized that in order to build such an advanced infrastructure we needed a core team of specialists and we also needed a partner who already had experience of building a similar solution for private enterprise," says Hans Arents, advisor on e-government strategy and program management for Co-ordination Cell Flemish e-Government (CORVE). "Since HPE (now DXC) is our outsourcer they were the best suited partner to help us in this effort. We built a core design team which consisted of specialists from HPE (now DXC) with a senior architect, senior analysts and a number of government specialists. Together with us they would be responsible for the design of the platform and would control how it was built."

Solution

Data sharing platform called MAGDA

After delivering an initial assessment and roadmap, the team of government employees and DXC specialists embarked on an application transformation project to design and build a state-of-the-art, inter-agency data exchange platform that would re-engineer the government's IT environment to increase responsiveness and quicken the pace of change.

Built on a Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) and known as Maximum Data Sharing between Administrations and Agencies (MAGDA), the platform enables once only data collection. Citizens log on to Flemish e-government websites using their electronic ID which provides authentication.

Therefore, if a citizen is applying for benefits, such as a bus pass, the system can by-pass preliminary identity questions and access relevant information, allowing applicants to complete tasks more quickly and with less red tape. Every company in Flanders also has a unique ID that speeds up processes by giving government administrators access to the company's comprehensive profile. DXC delivered various releases of the SOA framework and services on time and within budget.

Assets, resources and information are closely guarded to ensure privacy. The Flemish Government secured its entire IT infrastructure by addressing all aspects of security including people, processes, technology and content. The DXC platform controls access to the data and protects privacy by ensuring that it is only combined in certain ways and under very specific conditions. It is now written into Flemish law that the government is forbidden to ask a citizen for information that it already has.

Benefits

Annual savings of €97 million

"Using a cost model that's also used by the European Commission, we calculated that MAGDA brings annual savings to citizens of €97 million," says Arents. "That's money partly saved on our side but primarily on the side of citizens and enterprises that no longer have to re-enter the same information over and over again.

"We have invested €2 million a year in MAGDA over the eight years it's been in operation, so for a total spend of €16 million it's a good Return on Investment."

So far, 42 million data items, or transactions that previously involved paper, are done electronically. MAGDA supports 200 customers within the central Flemish Government and local government who use the available data to simplify and digitize their administrative processes.

"For example, we have a much easier service to buy your annual bus pass," adds Arents. "If you buy bus passes for a family, the second child gets a 20 percent discount and a third is free. To get the reduction, citizens used to have to go to County Hall and get an official family composition document then take that to the bus company to show that the family consisted of three people. Now they can do all that online. They go to the bus company website and request bus passes online. The system in the back-office validates the family composition through MAGDA, real-time and fraud resistant. They then just say how many bus passes they want, pay for them and get them automatically. A lot of time and trouble is saved."

The government has used MAGDA to simplify the process of obtaining college grants and it also expects to achieve considerable savings by issuing Digital Building Permits enabled by MAGDA. At the launch of this project it was predicted that 60 percent of all applications for planning permission would be digital in five years. That will lead to annual savings of €3 million for the local authorities and architects and would halve the cost for citizens, reducing the charge of €1,300 to €650.

"The MAGDA design and release teams include key people from HPE (now DXC) and we would not have been capable of building the platform without them."

– Hans Arents, advisor on e-government strategy and program management for Co-ordination Cell Flemish e-Government (CORVE)

Customer solution at a glance

DXC services
- DXC Applications Development

The MAGDA platform is now recognized throughout the European Union as an e-government best practice and has raised considerable interest from other governments including Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand and Saudi Arabia who have all visited Belgium to see it in action.

"Various federal and provincial governments have expressed interest in how Flanders and the Belgium government have worked together to establish an authentic sources platform and service," says Arents. "MAGDA has achieved two things – firstly validating the idea of using authentic data sources and secondly providing an infrastructure to access these authentic data sources. Canada and other governments are most interested in the policy framework, the service level agreements, and the shared services strategy and platform technology related to establishing authentic sources, while reducing data duplication and cost of operations."

DXC has played two important roles. One was designing the whole platform. From the very beginning we said that if we were going to build a platform like this we needed a very strong core team of integration experts consisting of both internal government specialists and DXC specialists.

"The MAGDA design team, senior architect and senior analyst were all provided by HPE (now DXC) and have remained the same throughout the project. Then you have the MAGDA release team of developers who have been building the MAGDA platform for operational success and stability. Without HPE (now DXC) we would not have been capable of building this."

Looking to the future the Flemish Government plans to expand the breadth of the platform to deliver more services such as accessing financial information about citizens and enterprises to aid decisions on entitlement to grants. It also plans to extend the depth of the platform by providing services for an increasing number of local authorities. DXC is currently building a virtual private cloud which will house all the Flemish Government's applications, including MAGDA.

About DXC
DXC Technology (NYSE: DXC) is the world's leading independent, end-to-end IT services company, helping clients harness the power of innovation to thrive on change. Created by the merger of CSC and the Enterprise Services business of Hewlett Packard Enterprise, DXC Technology serves nearly 6,000 private and public sector clients across 70 countries. The company's technology independence, global talent and extensive partner alliance combine to deliver powerful next-generation IT services and solutions. DXC Technology is recognized among the best corporate citizens globally. For more information, visit www.dxc.technology.

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