

Sector Analysis: Government

Targeting anytime, anywhere services for all Australians

David Harper

Vice President | Head of Public Services,
Capgemini Australia and New Zealand

In a surprise announcement in May 2019, the Prime Minister set out a structural change to simplify how Australians deal with federal government. The creation of Service Australia saw a renewed emphasis on service delivery under the leadership of a Minister for Government Services. This super Service Delivery Agency will build on similar initiatives at a State level to make it easier for people to access services and support from government.

While structural change puts a focus on accountability and priorities, governments will only succeed in improving access to services if they can tackle the integration of systems, multiple data sources and convoluted processes.

Many have tried to tackle the challenge. The Digital Transformation Agency (DTA), created the Digital Service

Standard as a set of best practice principles for designing and delivering government services. According to the DTA, it helps teams to build services that are simple, clear and fast. NSW government is recognised for the steps it has taken to create a stronger customer service culture and its leadership in digital service delivery.

The DTA Digital Service Standard advocates Agile and user-centric delivery. While Agile has become the norm for new service and project delivery, these projects often must navigate the complexity inherent in the legacy environment before delivering better outcomes and value.

Agile approaches do bring a sharper focus on customer outcomes and stronger alignment across organisational boundaries. They also create an environment where

there are incremental, and smaller, business and technical deployments. At a minimum, this helps manage the risk of delivery through smaller, more incremental business and technology changes.

As in many industries, the challenge of assuring quality is changing rapidly as government and customers interact through more complex digital channels and data is used with greater sophistication to improve the customer experience and compliance. Furthermore, advanced analytics, automation and the emergence of augmented or Artificial Intelligence (AI) in process optimisation creates further opportunities to improve service delivery – but, again, add complexity to the environment.

“ *The challenge of assuring quality is changing rapidly as government and customers interact through more complex digital channels.* ”

Automation in managing technology landscapes is emerging with Continuous Integration Continuous Development (CI/CD) - an area of developing interest and experience. Only a few years ago, forward thinkers listed DevOps and DataOps as key ambitions. Now there are many examples of successful projects that can claim significant progress in these areas.

Within this context of a changing customer service, data and technology development, the role of quality assurance in delivery has changed from a discrete activity at the end of a development lifecycle to an integral – and often automated – part of development and deployment. Automation in testing and deployment is also starting to find a place. In less complex environments, these technologies are maturing, while in the larger, more complex organisations, test automation is beginning to gather pace.

Data security remains a key priority, as government continues to manage the large volume of customer and sensitive data. Again, QA activities need to address the full scope of challenges around authorised access to services and appropriate use of data through to identifying and addressing errors in calculation and code.

Technology trends continue to encourage new innovative approaches of testing code and opportunities for QA with, for example, DevOps and continuous integration and continuous delivery, further enabling Agile operating environments. Most notable is the emergence of the applicability of artificial intelligence/machine learning as

it relates to driving efficiency at scale in large transaction processing environments.

While these techniques are starting to be deployed in business process, it is interesting to explore how learning algorithms will be used to improve QA activities. Such smart or advanced automation in testing will emerge once agencies have found their feet with automated testing.

So where to next? The use of Agile as a delivery method will mature and eventually become more embedded in the culture of an organisation. To enable this will require greater maturity in government procurement processes and changes to traditional funding models.

Automation in QA will become standard practice and agencies will look at further opportunities to automate the system development lifecycle. Process automation and learning algorithms will improve both customer service, compliance and the speed at which government can drive new strategic directions.

“ *Process automation and learning algorithms will improve both customer service, compliance and the speed at which government can drive new strategic directions.* ”

Traditional organisation boundaries – which often protect a power base – will blur as agencies look to share by utilising APIs. As new services are designed around the customer, traditional boundaries will be challenged, and the new economy of agency success will be based on an ability to share. We are already seeing this new “economy” emerge as data is shared across organisations to deliver government policy. This trend will continue with a greater emphasis on end-to-end service delivery rather than complex interactions and hand-offs between disparate organisations. Of course, navigating customer service improvements in government does require an understanding and respect of the legislation and policy which defines how processes need to be implemented and data used.

That said, we hope to see these changes adopted as a strong focus on customer service and access to “anytime anywhere” services for Australians wins out against the inertia of accepted practice, organisation boundary and embedded complexity.

