

# 10 IT Modernization Tips from Federal CIOs

*With the latest Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA) deadline on April 30, 2016, federal agencies are closely examining their IT budgets, acquisition processes and organizational workflows. Deloitte and Appian asked several federal CIOs from across government for their best IT modernization tips, lessons learned and perspective to help their peers continue to tackle transformation. Here is what they said:*

## 1. Get a Handle on What you Have

One CIO commented that, "the toughest challenge I faced when taking on my new role as CIO was gaining a comprehensive view of my IT project portfolio and a catalog of applications." If you don't get a handle on what you have, it could be nearly impossible to define a roadmap, identify duplication of applications draining resources or make a business case for new investments and projects.



## 2. Empower the Edge

The CIOs we spoke with agreed: top-down pressure is not the most effective way to implement lasting change within an IT organization. Breaking away from legacy systems is all about empowering the people at the edge. "If I tried to come in and drive change through the sheer force of my personality, it would not have gotten done," commented one CIO we spoke with. "Instead, we gave our people a meaningful mission, a mechanism to measure progress and the autonomy to achieve success."

## 3. Embed Your Consultants

When taking on an IT modernization initiative, identify a trusted partner and embed them within your organization for the length of the project; not just at the outset. Co-design the solution with your consultant in the room 100 percent of the time rather than having them design it and hand it to you. This allowed one CIO we spoke with to complete the solution design portion of their modernization project in 6 weeks versus the 9-16 months they were originally quoted.

## 4. Small Changes Have Big Impact

Changing something as simple as the location of a desktop icon can have a huge impact on customers. IT is deeply personal; it is a lifeline that connects the user to their mission. One CIO we spoke with conducted a discrete pilot with just 200 users. His team addressed the smallest of issues that would slow adoption on a larger scale and then deployed to more than 3,000 users without any issues.



## 5. Make Adoption Go Viral

"Find those who are less resistant to change and give them the new technology first," advised one CIO. "They will become advocates, spread interest and foster adoption among those who are more resistant to change." This viral approach is a more effective way to organically reduce resistance to change across organizational work cultures and sub-cultures.

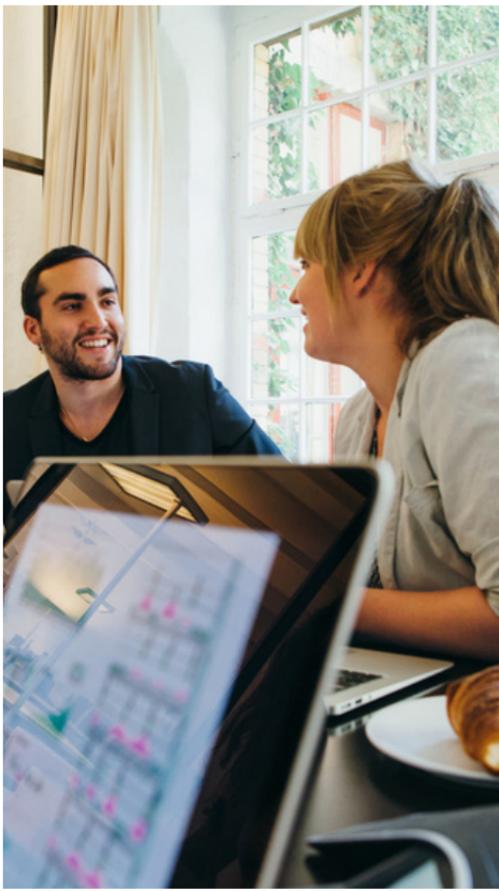
## 6. Make Your Strategic Plans Tactical

Strategic plans should not be measured in thump-value (the impact they make when dropped on the floor). Instead, take a balanced scorecard approach that aligns objectives with strategic goals. "We identified 138 tactical milestones that we methodically cross off, month-to-month," stated one CIO we spoke with. "I can tell you that we are exactly 15.3 percent complete on our strategic plan." Breaking objectives into detailed lists of tactical milestones can provide a precise way to measure the percent complete of any objective at any moment.



## 7. Stand Up a PMO

Especially critical in distributed organizations, establishing a Project Management Office creates a gateway that all new projects must pass through. "Our PMO gives me the opportunity to focus on things that are important to me, that might not be as important to those who never have to worry about being on The Hill in front of Congress," commented one CIO. A PMO serves as a gateway to allow for the application of a governance model, which can help ensure consistent rollout of uniform, high-quality solutions.



## 8. Three Reasons For and Against

When considering a new IT modernization project, identify three reasons in favor of taking on the effort and three reasons not to. This type of divergent thinking encourages IT teams to identify the issues that could stand in the way of project success and develop ways to mitigate them upfront.

## 9. Agility is #1 (Efficiency is #3)

IT modernization is first and foremost about agility. "In the 1990's, the #1 driver of modernization for a CIO was efficiency," stated one of the CIOs we spoke to. "Nowadays, because the world is changing so rapidly, agility is #1 and resiliency is #2." Resiliency is about scale and security. IT modernization efforts should concentrate on scaling to accommodate unforeseen surges in demand, as well as cultivating the ability to identify when a security event has occurred and addressing it quickly. Achieve agility and resiliency and efficiency will follow.

## 10. Produce a Catalog of Reusable Modules

Federal agencies should identify and pursue opportunities to move away from developing on-premise, custom IT infrastructures, systems and applications. Instead, the future is about reuse. "We looked to the commercial sector to see what tools and services they had to offer," stated one CIO. "From there, we developed a catalog of reusable modules from which we can build new solutions two to three times faster than before."