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THE VIRGINIA IT AGENCY'S FAST-TRACKED DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Project initiation: July 2019
Project completion: April 2021

Business Process Innovations Category

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VIRGINIA
IT AGENCY

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Executive Summary

Digital transformation typically speeds up business processes, but no one could have guessed the rapid acceleration that would occur over the past year at the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA).

Initial digital transformation activities had been underway for several years. VITA's [award-winning](#) 2019 completion of service delivery transformation for Virginia's executive branch customers opened the door for the agency to conclude a number of planned projects designed to finalize VITA's own reorganization, innovate business processes and further enhance the customer experience for Virginia's partner agencies.
It was a nice plan, however; those plans soon changed.

What do you do when a global pandemic hits, key positions remain unfilled, staff and budgets are frozen and a full year of digital transformation planning and development remains? How do you achieve your goals? These critical business questions were made even more necessary by the sudden shift of Virginia and VITA's workforce to telework due to COVID-19.

To rise to the challenge, VITA's information technology (IT) team first focused on tools to help the remote workforce. The person-to-person nature of transmission of the COVID-19 virus required that workplaces shift almost immediately to a virtual environment. To address, the VITA team first identified overall opportunities for improvement, focusing on quick wins that did not require hires or purchases. Leadership agreed to focus on proof of concept projects, allowing the team to start building with existing tools.

The program began with six main goals:

1. Create an agile environment for innovation
2. Proactively capture business opportunities
3. Improve service delivery, including time to market
4. Improve employee effectiveness
5. Enhance customer journey
6. Enable data-driven decision making

The digital strategy focused on several dozen initiatives in 10 major areas, including creation of an easy-to-use data analytics platform, improving and automating internal and external customer processes, and digital transformation of all the core service areas of VITA, including operations, end user services and governance.
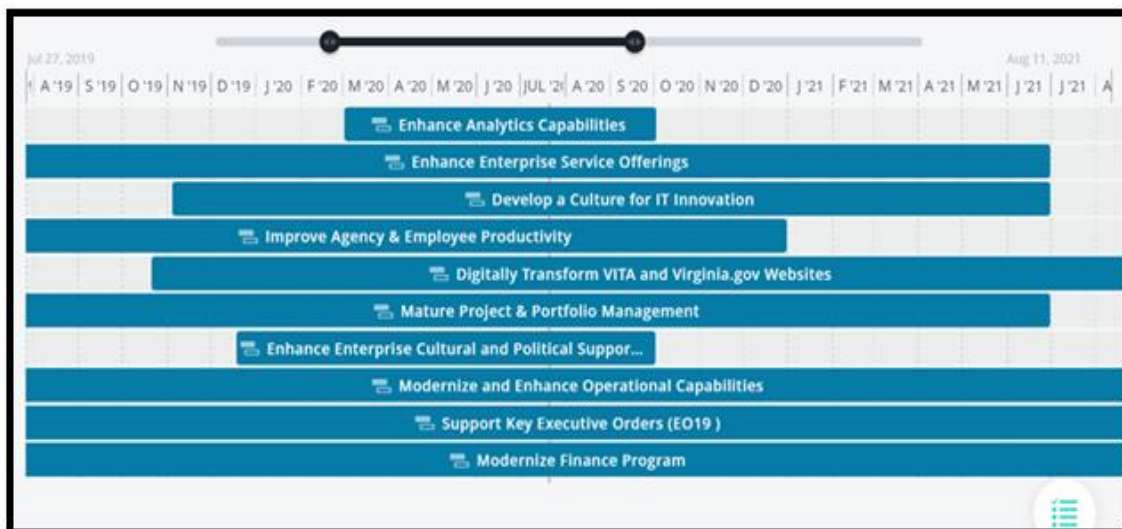
VITA's digital transformation goals centered around 10 major work streams

Project Narrative:

Idea

The VITA information technology team was working toward digital transformation when COVID-19 impacts threatened to halt the work completely. The team suddenly had 65 agencies and 55,000 employees to serve and transition to telework. How could the team continue to innovate and digitally transform when so many immediate needs filled their plates? The team realigned priorities to use the pandemic impacts to further accelerate what was possible, even with fewer resources. If the team invested time in using innovative technologies for needs at hand, then strategic, programmatic changes would be even easier to implement for those of larger scale.

The IT team prioritized making the most of the tools already available to them, including:
- PowerBI
- SharePoint
- Microsoft Teams
- Dynamics Workflow
- PowerAutomate WorkFlow
- Digital Signatures
- Chatbots

They focused on learning all of the functionalities of each tool, as well as new skills, for three months, training everyone on the team from project managers, analysts, coders and data personnel. The team gained first-hand, yet collaborative experience with each of the tools. They were provided with latitude to innovate and were encouraged to try new things, even if the end results were not usable for team purposes

After training, several teams were developed to create a management proof of concept dashboard quickly, in just six weeks, using data from several different systems. There were several solutions with immediate positive impacts, one of which resulted in a production-worthy dashboard for VITA.

Over just the last year, the teams developed and managed a total of eleven proof-of-concept projects, even in the midst of impacts from COVID-19. Of these, 10 key successful implementations now are in production, including:
- Enterprise workflow
- Enterprise project management office automation and reporting
- Management dashboards
- Digital business tools, enabling business-like digital signatures
- Remote collaboration sites, both internal and external
- Leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) or robotic process automation (RPA)

Impact

With 10 implementations now in production for VITA, the team is now already reaping rewards from these new virtual programs. The new digital portfolio has streamlined workflows and provided multiple new business process innovations. Examples of many of these projects and their results can be found below.
- **Microsoft Teams** was launched within the VITA internal team during the first month of the pandemic. With nearly every team member working remotely, VITA scaled its collaborative workspaces up and

out to provide key Teams channels created for COVID task forces and each individual directorate at VITA. The project was scaled from a simple proof of concept to dozens of team sites and other
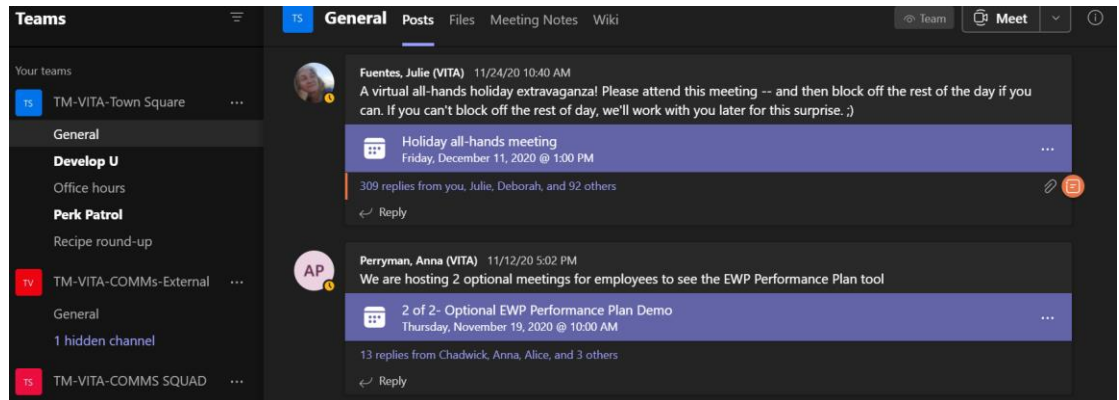
collaborative spaces within a couple of weeks, which enabled new productivity capabilities. To help the team stay connected, Teams provided a channel for all-hands meetings for 200+ VITA employees, which provided opportunities for interactivity (garnering over 300 comments within a 90-minute meeting) and a noted overall increase in employee engagement, which has been especially impactful and beneficial during the pandemic.

- **Agency-wide human resources workflow for performance planning and evaluations:** Completed in under three months, the customer relationship management system was used to manage a process previously carried out using paper files, wet signatures and layers of email approvals. The team repurposed Dynamics
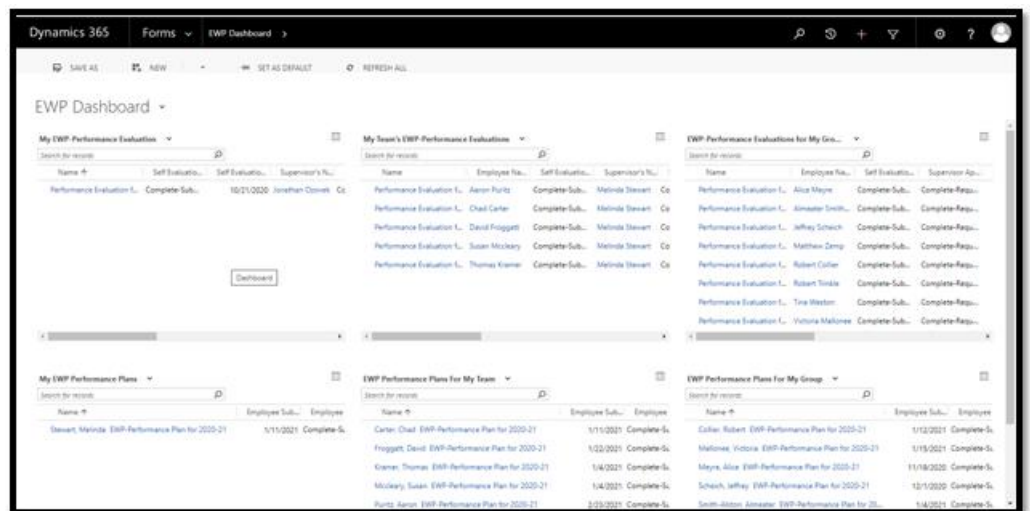

and leveraged PowerAutomate to create workflows and dashboards. As a result of the implementation, the team replaced hundreds of emails, manual encryption for security, and hard copy files with automated flow and dashboards for staff and management. This one example of digital transformation will save approximately 1,900 hours at a fully realized value of over $140,000 per year.

- **Customer Account Management Dashboard:** VITA agencies crave transparency, and they depend on their customer account managers to share detailed information quickly. Using the dashboard, account managers now have visibility into six different systems to see and share strategic plans, projects, bills, inventory and data. The dashboard is saving time, staff resources, provides better visibility into programs and enhances VITA's relationships with customers overall, through
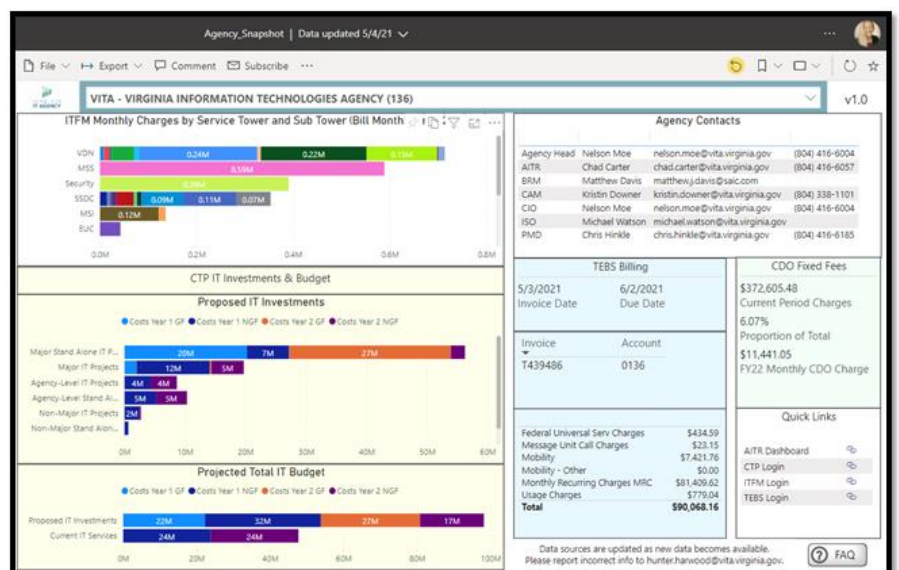
this improved customer experience.

- **Workgroup Process Dashboards and Work Management:** VITA's strategy and transformation team assists teams of colleagues with developing and sharing business processes across the agency for awareness and collaboration. Their new dashboard provides a way to track projects, workflows, and assignments with automated notifications, which is saving more time and resources.
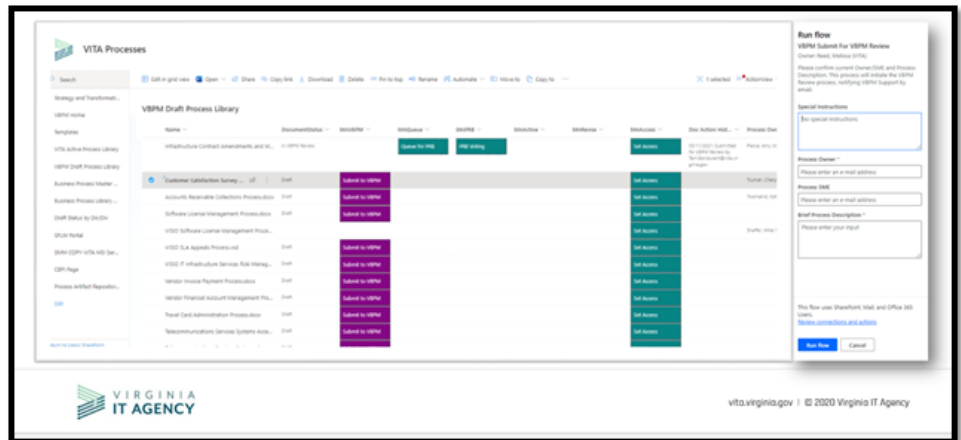
- **Internal enterprise project management office:** VITA's internal project team is able to leverage their dashboard and input site to track dates, resources and timekeeping for the dozens of projects ongoing at any given time. The site was completed in under three months with only two staff members. The dashboard provides status reports, data on health of efforts, staffing levels, risks and issues, as well as portfolio capacity levels. Leaders

can also create new reports for inclusion using PowerBI. So far, the site is saving the team over 100 hours a week, which was previously used to manually compile reports and dashboards. At a billable rate of $75 per hour, the team is easily saving $150,000 a year through this single effort.

- **Statewide tool for enterprise agency strategic plans and project submissions:** VITA leads technology strategic planning for the Commonwealth, which was previously submitted via a complex tool that was not user-friendly. It was replaced by an enterprise portfolio & project management software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution, called Enterprise One by Planview, which streamlined, matured and automated any previously manual submissions and forms for VITA, its customers and governance stakeholder groups.

- **Enhanced contract reporting mechanisms:** VITA manages an extensive number of reporting and deliverable contractual

obligations for its IT infrastructure services suppliers. In summer of 2020, VITA oversaw a system rollout to manage the submission, review and approval of the current 14,029 contractual obligations managed. Since the rollout, the team has enhanced the service, automating conditions of acceptance and development of corrective action plans. In the past year, VITA has focused on improvements to the deliverables management program, resulting in overhaul of the templates, schedules, training, and acceptance criteria. Though this effort, on-time delivery and quality of these deliverables has greatly improved, with a 98% acceptance rate (Sept. 2020-April 2021) from a 79% acceptance rate (Jan. 2020-Aug. 2020). VITA has also improved its review time of deliverables, with a current average review time of only 11 business days.

- **Overall contract documentation enhancements:** Through additional digitization, VITA developed a detailed library of all contractual documents, over 630 in all, arranged by document type and contract period, to effectively manage and organize the files. The library allows VITA and its multisourcing service integrator to effectively manage the contracts and any changes to the obligations. These contract changes include the addition of new services and continual improvements of service level measures to enhance the services provided to VITA customers. With these new capabilities, VITA was able to successfully and more easily execute 67 changes in 2020 and has already expeditiously executed 35 changes through April 2021.

These examples and other tech tools continue to advance VITA's digital portfolio and transformation, especially during effects of the pandemic. The team was able to deploy a pilot chatbot for multiple websites, including one for the Virginia Department of Health, which provided live question-and-answer opportunities for site visitors seeking the latest health data and guidance. The team also implemented digital signature capabilities across the enterprise, which eliminated the need for manual, yet critical memoranda of understanding.

In alignment with the State Chief Information Officer Top 10 Priorities, VITA's own digital transformation has brought enhanced fiscal management, consolidation and optimization, customer relationship management, and key investments in the workforce to have readiness for even more transformation in the future.

While saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in staff time, equipment and hard copy materials, VITA's digital transformation has offered unparalleled benefits and lessons learned for sharing across the Virginia enterprise. Through ideation and innovation of business processes, VITA is well-positioned to continue achieving its goals of creating an environment for innovation, capturing business opportunities, improving service delivery and teammate effectiveness, while also enhancing the customer experience and enabling data-driven decision making. The team has also seen marked improvements in intangible benefits, too, including enhanced overall collaboration, better strategy and a supportive internal agency culture, which propels and incentivizes even more compounding positive effects from both digital transformation and business process innovation.