



**Title:** Transformers: How the State of Connecticut is transforming IT Managers while moving toward optimization

**Category:** Enterprise IT Management Initiatives

**State:** Connecticut

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## 1. Executive Summary

Where would technology be without the people to conceptualize, design, implement and support such great improvements in the world?

The State of Connecticut Department of Administrative Services'(DAS), information technology bureau has undergone numerous changes over the past two years. A significant catalyst for this change is the statewide IT optimization effort led by the CIO of the bureau, Mark Raymond. This optimization would bring together all IT services into one centralized group called Bureau of Information Technology Solutions (BITS).

The management team met to discuss the impact of optimization to the staff. Moving from an Agency focus to a Statewide IT focus was much different for everyone. Understanding that strong leadership and management is the cornerstone of employee engagement and happiness, Mark Raymond, and Barbara Irish (Director of Workforce Development) crafted a program to tackle and transform the way managers manage their staff at BITS.

As a result, BITS IT Management Development Program was created. Understanding that the BITS IT Management Development Program is a critical component to achieving the goal of statewide IT optimization and increasing employee engagement, leadership and management have embraced the program and look forward to the next phase of this enterprise IT management initiative!

## 2. Project Narrative

### 2.1

#### Concept

The concept of the BITS IT Management Development Program is a result of the statewide IT optimization effort, spanning over 40 agencies and 600 staff. One of the largest driving forces behind the IT optimization effort was the impending mass retirement wave, dubbed the “Silver Tsunami”, that was anticipated to occur by July of 2022. We can consider this retirement wave, the problem. The opportunity was the actual IT optimization, providing cost-savings to the constituents by addressing the retirement wave centrally and through streamlining the way services are provided to the citizens of Connecticut

#### **Business Problem – Moving to Improve Business Processes for Connecticut**

With this opportunity for IT optimization, it became apparent that aside from consolidating technology and services, we needed to consolidate IT professionals. These IT professionals cross all ranks – directors, managers, supervisors, and staff, all of whom are members of various unions and non-represented professionals.

Through leadership one-on-ones with IT management across the agencies, staff surveys for all levels and personal outreach, it became apparent our management practices in the new optimized world, needed work. Without consistent management practices, clear communication strategies and collaboration, BITS would be destined to fail at providing improved business processes to the constituents of the state.



## Why Solving Inconsistent Management Practices Matter in the IT Optimization World

As you bring IT professionals together from various agencies that have been accustomed to certain management practices, often not positive approaches to managing and leading their staff and combine them with a team that has another set of management practices, you are not solving the business problem nor are you improving it. These inconsistencies impact how technologies are identified, developed, and implemented, which could negatively affect the experiences of the citizens here in Connecticut. Through participation in the BITS IT Management Development, managers, and supervisors across all agencies, are presented with consistent tools and strategies to effectively manage and coach staff to success in the new IT optimized environment.

This allows for the BITS management team to convey and reiterate the same message to all IT staff, embrace and understand the expected management model/approach. This in turn, will improve morale across all levels and reinforce the organizational culture of being one team, owning the outcome and making it better.



Be One Team!

Own the Outcome!

Make it Better!

## What Makes this IT Enterprise Management Initiative Different?

This program was created with current cost and time resources in mind, aligning with the core value of the Director of Workforce Enablement, Barbara Irish, that adult learning needs to be practical and applicable to what people are doing today. This program consists of customized content, developed by engaging senior leadership. They were asked for input on the skills that should be addressed based on their assessment of the IT management workforce.

### Innovative and Distinct

The BITS IT Management Development Program is a unique offering at the State of Connecticut. In the past, individual agencies offered training programs for managers and staff as budgets and time allowed, but the content was not customized nor taught in a quick and adaptable manner that this program offers. This program brings together over 40 agency IT management staff, and teaches them clear, concise management practices that will empower them to lead their staff across the state. In addition, this program gives the group a chance to exchange ideas and learn from each other. Because of the customized content and focus on adult learning, the program is designed to fit the need all while leaving time for managers to accomplish their tasks of managing projects and staff as needed.

The BITS IT Management Development Program does address a universal issue that is considered one of the State CIO Top Ten Priorities, **Workforce**. [Click here to learn more on these priorities.](#)



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**Workforce:** preparing for the future workforce and reimagining the government workforce; transformation of knowledge, skills and experience; more defined roles for IT asset management, business relationship management skills, service integration

The BITS Management Development Program can be applied to any state, organization, or individual agency. It can scale up and down, content can be customized to fit the needs of the group. The notion of adult learning- where applicability and practicality take the front seat, allows for a flexible schedule to be appropriate for the workload of the individuals involved. Investment in people is a key to a successful and healthy organization.

### 2.2 Implementation

The roadmap to the BITS IT Management Development Program was formed by the leadership team identifying the six specific skills needed for managers to successfully achieve the goals of optimization. The purpose of honing these skills in our managers is for them to have a sense of ownership of the environment they are creating for their staff, keeping staff engaged and to really change the organization culture.



Once these six skills were identified, work started on a training plan that considered the importance of interactive learning, and training that is practical and applicable to the situations our managers deal with daily. For example, managers participate in 6 hours of training followed by an assignment to apply what was learned. Later, the managers return to discuss results and get feedback from peers and instructors.



It's understood that it is a continual process to build leadership skills for the broad set of expectations we have for our people, it's not something where you take one class, and you are done. There will be continual reinforcement of the outcomes of the class, and communication about the checklist process will be ongoing. The intention is for the managers to apply these disciplines in how we operate. The leadership team was involved in all aspects of identifying the skillset, establishing the curriculum and communication feedback loop. Through continually investing in tools and training for our managers, BITS is demonstrating the critical role they play in the success and overall engagement of employees and that they are our most important asset and are the cornerstone of the new organization we are building.

## 2.3 Impact

Employees matter at the BITS, therefore the BITS IT Management Development Program matters. Understanding that enlightened, informed, and consistent management practices are the cornerstone to the engaged workforce is why this program is critical to the success of technology at the State of Connecticut. Though the program is still in its preliminary phase of implementation, it has already made measurable differences across the state, those of which will be discussed below.

### Management Environment Before the Program

As noted from the CIO, Mark Raymond, management development of IT professionals had fallen by the wayside over the past few years. Reasons varying from management turnover to fiscal restraints, the state did not have a clearly defined management program for IT professionals to participate in. The lack of a formal management program for IT managers, permitted unhealthy management styles to continue, hindering growth and skill strengthening of those managers that wanted to improve their skills.

The Director of Workforce Development, Barbara Irish, spearheaded an annual survey that began prior to the IT optimization – seeking true feedback on how employees viewed their managers and rated their skillset and coaching tactics – to gain insight as to what really needed to be worked on. This survey was given to all IT professionals across all the agencies that were to become part of the IT optimization and the new bureau, BITS.

BITS Annual Survey Results Comparison					
		2019*	2020	2021	% Delta
<b>Total Respondents</b>		94	232	367	+135
	<b>Response</b>				
<b>Management</b>					
	Positive	54%	53%	46%	-7%
	Neutral	26%	32%	35%	+3%
	Negative	20%	15%	19%	+4%

As you can see based on the survey results, management perception from employee feedback proved that this program is needed.

### Benefits of the Program and Its Impact on Connecticut Constituents

As participants move throughout the program, a comradery is built, naturally. Through workshops and content, participation in exercises and management assessments, participants gain a better understanding of each other and themselves. These eye-opening workshops allow management to see each other and their strengths and weaknesses. This creates a sense of community and belonging.

Through this community, collaboration on IT initiatives and technology challenges that once individual agencies faced alone, are now discussed and solutioned often together – through Statewide IT Management Teams Chat, or through Monthly Leadership Retreats. As the IT optimization effort moves forward and the BITS IT Management Development Program continues to grow, measurable impacts are seen.

- ✓ Increased Employee Engagement: participate in surveys, volunteer for committees moving to change the organizational culture, contribute during optimization open mics, seek clarification of content during All Hands meetings, sign up for self-paced LinkedIn Learning
- ✓ Employees are Embracing the Organizational Culture Behaviors: Be One Team, Own the Outcome, Make it Better as their managers are now consistently delivering the same message across all IT divisions and units in the new optimized world.
- ✓ Managers are starting to actively listen, delegate more and coach and grow their staff! Allowing for directors to lead and employees to feel they are trusted!
- ✓ Creates a better place to work! Drawing talent into the BITS workforce – strengthening our innovative technology initiatives.

### Former Manager Participants’ Feedback on the BITS IT Management Development Program

To gain insight into the participant’s perspective on the program, a survey was sent to the managers soliciting anonymous responses on the content and its usefulness. Positive and constructive feedback was received and shared with Mark Raymond and Barbara Irish.

How much do you agree with this statement? The content delivered in the BITS Management Development Program was practical, useful and challenging and was delivered with an extraordinary high level of passion & enthusiasm.

[More Details](#)

● Strongly Agree	11
● Agree	5
● Disagree	0
● Not Sure	0
● Other	0



What topics of the BITS Management Development Program resonated with you?

[More Details](#)

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Responses

Latest Responses

*"Principles of Management - Foundations of Management"*

*"Being a better listener"*

*"- Delegating for Growth - Communication/Listening - Getting everyo..."*

### What’s Next for the BITS IT Management Development Program?

Because the management program has only been conducted 5 cycles to date, it should be considered in its initial stages with a great deal of expansion and growth on the horizon. Mark

Raymond, CIO, and Barbara Irish, Director of Workforce Enablement, both agree that the program really is just beginning.

“We know we are not done” said Mark Raymond. Whether it be a 2<sup>nd</sup> level workshop created and customized to dive deeper into management topics, or a refresher course offered on-going to participants, both creators of the program agree that there is a need for more. Investing in improving management skills and truly changing the organizational culture is what this program’s mission is, and that will be a continual effort.

#### *Items to considered for enhancing the BITS IT Management Development Program*

- ❖ Program validity and its importance should be communicated to agency business leaders
- ❖ Set the expectation that these skill sets taught are being implemented
- ❖ Content needs to be re-assessed as the program is taken to the next level of management skill development
- ❖ Senior Leadership should strongly encourage active management participation during the program cycle

#### **Worthy of investment and continuation of the BITS IT Management Development Program?**

This program is worthy of the initial investment and should be considered in the future to be maintained, because it does have an impact, with such a small investment utilizing current resources. Through the IT optimization and the program’s continuation and expansion, the State of Connecticut can: stop recreating the wheel for technology initiatives, break down agency IT silos, increase employee engagement and career growth, understand management performance expectations and styles and demonstrate that BITS is a great place to work.

#### **Summary**

With the continued expansion and growth of the BITS IT Management Development Program, we can expect a more skilled and engaged employee. This creates the space for technology directors to think and plan more strategically. It will allow managers to manage staff more effectively, support their supervisors understand what the goals and strategic direction in BITS and for the organizational culture. Engage the workforce, manage, and provide the appropriate assistance for them to perform their tasks and continue to grow! Coach them to success, which will result in, both internal and external customers/constituents, improved quality and quantity of technologies and support.

