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The Mi Modern Workplace Remote Worker Program

Category: Enterprise IT Management Initiatives

State: Michigan

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Project End: On-going

Contact: Jay Salmon
State of Michigan
Department of Technology, Management & Budget
SalmonJ@michigan.gov

Executive Summary

The State of Michigan experienced one of biggest governmental transformations with the mandate requiring state employees to work remotely due to the COVID-19pandemic. In March 2020, more than 60 percent of our workforce began working 100 percent from their home offices. As the technology provider for all of state government, the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget (DTMB) needed to refine business processes with innovative solutions to accommodate this workforce shift. Our strategy was focused on multiple fronts:

- **Modern Toolset.** Accelerate the adoption of Microsoft 365 productivity tools to accommodate a remote workforce.

- **Training.** Provide learning forums to help staffs navigate our new tools, supplemented with online forums to exchange tips and best practices. A complimentary effort included training our help desk staffs to respond to a variety of questions related to the roll-out of new technologies and connectivity issues tied to remote access.

- **Return to Office Planning.** DTMB moved swiftly to cancel leased space on our Lansing, Michigan campus. With fewer workspaces available, we needed to accommodate the demand for office space for workers returning to the office. We developed a mobile hoteling application to allow workers to reserve workspaces designated for multi-use.

This transformation was executed by the Michigan Mi Modern Workplace (MWP) program. The program is staffed with twenty-five employees tasked with equipping State of Michigan employees with capabilities that are on par with top organizations around the world. Since 2019, the program has focused on key Microsoft 365 tools that strengthen Security & Compliance, Collaboration, Mobility, Secure remote meetings, and secure storage of data. The MWP program has had remarkable success promoting adoption of new tools thanks to the cross-functional makeup of its teams spanning DTMB (infrastructure, agency services, cybersecurity, shared solutions, and communications). The program also boasts an established champion community with tech-focused representatives from each state agency.

Champions gain exclusive insight and the opportunity to help their agencies effectively use the modern tools available at the State of Michigan. Technology policy and tool changes are discussed with our customer agencies to understand both impact and provide lead time for execution before we begin any transformation service. One of the key reasons DTMB was able to introduce innovative process and technology solutions for our remote workforce was the strength of our communication approach. To ensure smooth agency and user experience during new tech implementation and changes, MWP fosters internal and external alignment through collaboration with key stakeholders and prepares end users with effective communication and educational resources.

Our story will be detailed in the subsequent idea, implementation, and impact sections of this submission. Our project began in January 2020 with targeted implementations along the way.

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer issued Executive Order 2020-91 in March 2020. This expansive order mandated multiple safeguards to protect Michigan's workers from the COVID-19 virus. One of the explicit safeguards was to use remote work to the fullest extent possible. The Mi Modern Workplace (MWP) program was key to addressing the problem of ensuring state workers could be as productive while working remotely compared to working onsite before the pandemic. The MWP program team laid the groundwork that supported broad adoption of collaboration tools that would allow more than 30,000 remote workers to stay connected as each state agency continued to fulfill their respective missions remotely.

Step one for the MWP program was the extension of Michigan's Virtual Private Network (VPN) infrastructure to support the new remote workforce model, which allowed employees to securely access State of Michigan resources while working outside of state office buildings. Previous peak usage of the state's VPN was approximately 6,000 users per day during a major weather closure. During the pandemic, VPN usage more than quadrupled to more than27,000 users daily. In May 2023, we are averaging 20,000 daily connections as many agencies continue remote and hybrid work plans.

Our next task was the transition from Skype for Business to Microsoft Teams to provide a modern and secure remote workspace for employees. Microsoft Teams was bundled into our enterprise license agreement, and our phase out of Skype was fast tracked to reduce support costs. We needed a universal collaboration tool to connect more than 30,000 remote workers supporting 20 different state agencies. This is critical since many agencies rely on each other to execute agency-specific missions. In 2023, chat usage has 42,000 active Teams users sending about 9 million chats and participating in 250,000 meetings a month. The number of Teams Shared Workspaces (Teams) have increased from 100 to 3,500. The MWP program team developed an online request tool for automatically provisioning Teams and SharePoint sites with the necessary security settings.

Michigan considers these changes to a modern workplace the new standard since most state agencies will never again have a 100 percent onsite presence. To underscore this transition from office to remote, Michigan was able to offload more than 400,000 square feet in leased office space, securing annual savings of more than $4.6 million. Michigan has never experienced such a sharp reduction in office space. The reality that many workers no longer had an office to return to forced us to address our new space issue. Work groups spanning several state agencies began Return to Office Planning. Strategy meetings focused on:

- How often will staff be onsite?
- How many staff need to be accommodated daily?
- Dedicated stations vs. hotel stations.
- Collaboration Areas
- Work needs - Technology, Conference Rooms, Files, Lockers.

To accommodate onsite needs for workers returning to offices, the MWP team developed a mobile hoteling application that allows workers to identify and reserve common workspaces in eight state office

buildings on the Lansing campus. Several agencies have offered up office space no longer needed and enter this space into the hoteling application via an administrative function for select users.

This transformation of our business process is supported through multiple channels. Our Client Service Center (help desk) was trained on the tools to provide online support for employees. In 2021 our employee call center managed more than 262,200 contacts (22,000 per month). We have noted remote work has changed the dynamic of our calls, with home Internet Service Providers (ISPs), routers, and Microsoft 365 factors causing an increase of 1-minute per call. Despite the landscape change, high quality was maintained with a 97 percent customer satisfaction rating and more than 84 percent First Contact Resolution. One effort to assist the state's remote workforce included the 2021 launch of the "Staying Secure" internal SharePoint site that offers state workers helpful cybersecurity tips and reminders on the acceptable use of state resources (e.g., safe Internet use), how to secure home Internet connections, the proper use of authentication for accounts and tools, appropriate print and electronic data management and the integration, connection and use of personal devices when conducting state business. Remote work is now commonplace for both private and public sector entities. Sustainability is ensured through monthly MWP forums with champions representing the state's 20 state agency partners. Microsoft 365 updates, remote work policy changes, and information sharing is cascaded to the enterprise and our communications office assists agencies in developing clear and consistent messaging around our new business processes.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Mi Modern Workplace (MWP) program was included in our DTMB Strategic Plan, published in 2020. It was tied to Strategic Goal 4, "Maximize Employee Performance." DTMB's enterprise view is to reduce our IT footprint by providing enterprise toolsets for state employees. The implementation began with the restructuring of our Microsoft enterprise agreement to include Office 365, Teams, and Cloud-based storage.

This agreement was updated in January 2022 to include low-code / no-code solutions offered by Power Apps and Power Automate tools. Engagement began with our twenty state agencies using our quarterly customer partnership meetings. DTMB pitched the idea of an enhanced Microsoft 365 offering to the financial directors for the agencies. There was a trade-off. Agency rates would increase 10 percent per year for new functionality and tools. To mitigate the impact of the increases to agencies in the Fiscal Year 2021 budget, DTMB secured legislative funding of $5 million as an increase to the DTMB appropriation. An additional $5 million was allocated from our internal service fund, which is where we collect rate charges spanning DTMB. These two funding sources allowed us to minimize the aggregate rate increase to the agencies beginning in Fiscal Year 2022 to $2.8 million. Our annual investment is $36 million and the E5 Microsoft licensing level includes Microsoft Office 365, Active Directory, Azure Active Directory, and a suite of security products. We also have licenses to the Power Apps and Power automate low-code / no-code development tools. These development tools are a strategic investment recommended by our Innovation and Solutions Design Team. To support the use of Power Apps and Power Automate we have created multiple container-based environments to develop, test and promote applications. Our hoteling reservation application was launched in early 2022 using these new development tools.

The MWP program has twenty-five staff who have adopted an Agile-like approach to implementing new tools and features as part of quarterly sprints. We have a predictable cadence that generates excitement as we turn-on additional functionality. Successful implementation throughout the pandemic is the result of communications and collaboration. Our Microsoft subscription includes a dedicated Microsoft Customer Success Manager. This resource brings in Microsoft subject matter experts to outline Microsoft 365 product features and benefits to our agency Champions team. This team is staffed by volunteers from each state agency. Their job is to understand new product features and to jointly develop use-cases used to evangelize the benefits of adopting these new features. This volunteer engagement has been significant in the uptick in usage of Teams and other product features. It is not DTMB trying to convince agencies to use these products as part of the states redefined business processes, it is the agencies themselves selling the benefits. This has been a fundamental shift in how we market technology solutions. We've abandoned the "if you build it, they will come" approach and rely on our agency partners to help with the marketing and communications. A great example of how the program solicits approval, buy-in, awareness and adoption from stakeholders is the 2021 implementation of the Microsoft 365 Lifecycle Management program. Stakeholders helped us author a revised administrative policy governing data management. The policy addresses the increasing volume of Microsoft-based files generated while limiting potential data breaches. Remote work has resulted in 450,000 daily Teams chats. Our 180-day outlook on storage has grown by 41 TB. To manage these increases, Michigan rolled out a series of job-aid tools to both educate and communicate the need to manage file storage. The new Microsoft Lifecyle Management plan enforces rules for file deletion after a specified amount of time, based on each Microsoft Office 365 application. This initiative aligns with the enterprise policy on secure file storage resulting in reduced operating costs for IT system maintenance.

End-user support is provided by our help desk along with designated agency champions who communicate updates to all Michigan employees. Our communication strategy includes regular training vignettes and best practices tips at our internal share point site.
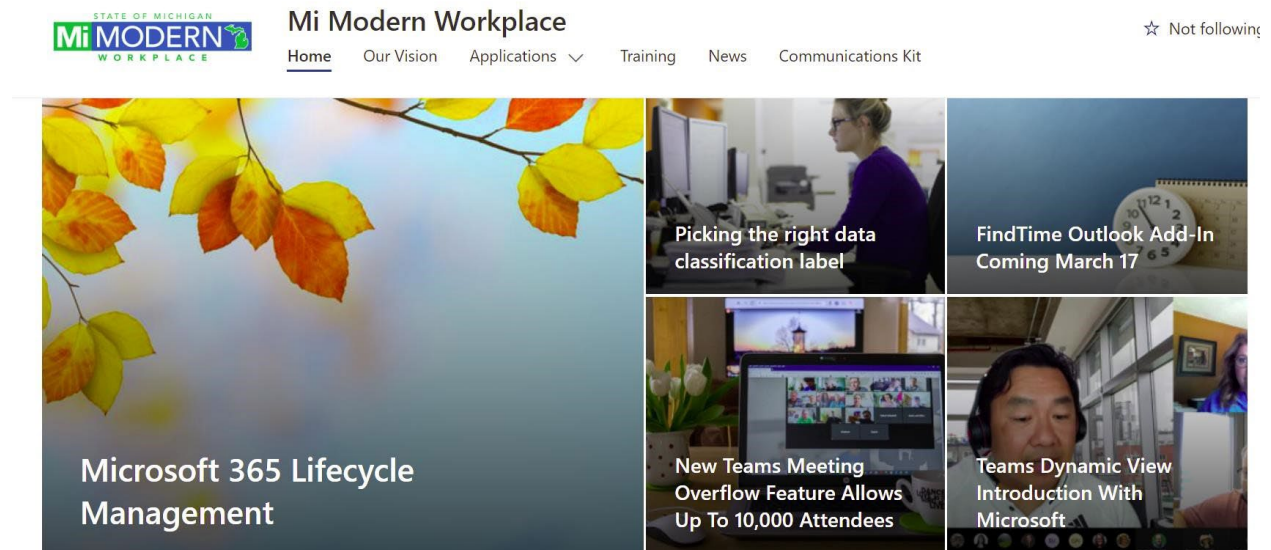
IMPACT

When DTMB announced a Fiscal Year 2020 rate increase to implement the Mi Modern Workplace program, anchored by our new enterprise investment in Microsoft products, Agencies were not happy. While we covered the costs in Fiscal Year 2021, the rate increases needed to generate the additional $2.8 million in subsequent years was met with criticism – service providers always get beat up when prices are raised. Then along came COVID-19. The Governor's Office issued an Executive Order in March 2020 compelling all state employees who could work remotely to do so. Overnight, 30,000 state employees had to work remotely. Our strategic investment in the E5 Microsoft office platform that was criticized as being too expensive was now being lauded as visionary. Remote work is here to stay, and Michigan's investment has allowed state work to continue without interruption. The business process impacts are hard to ignore. Microsoft Teams provides a secure remote workspace and remote work has increased chat usage from 18,000 daily users to 45,000. The number of Teams Shared Workspaces have increased from 100 to 2,750. The MWP program developed an online request tool for automatically provisioning Teams and SharePoint sites with necessary security settings. We have a robust online community forum that shares ideas and best practices around Microsoft 365. Continued outreach to support further tool adoption includes a 4,200-member online Yammer community forum and Weekly Microsoft-led training sessions on Microsoft 365 tools.

Concerns about local storage of data were addressed with the Microsoft 365 Lifecycle Management policy that automatically removes unused data after a specific amount of time to reduce storage costs and strengthen security and risk-mitigation tied to data. This covers Teams Chat, Outlook, OneDrive, Teams Shared Workspaces, and SharePoint files. This policy effects all State of Michigan employees. Significant communications and job aids have been created to assist staff in properly removing old and unused data. The migration of 85 TB of data from home drives to our cloud-based OneDrive saves $2.6 million annually in storage costs.

Another effort to assist the state's remote workforce was to develop a "Staying Secure" internal SharePoint site that offers state workers helpful cybersecurity tips and reminders on the acceptable use of state resources (e.g., safe Internet use), how to secure home Internet connections, the proper use of authentication for accounts and tools, appropriate print and electronic data management and the integration, connection and use of personal devices when conducting state business. Since its launch in June 2021, we have seen a help desk call reduction tied to these issues.

In 2021, DTMB enabled 60,000 employees and contractors for Microsoft Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) to further secure our network given remote office work. All users can register to use Self-Service Password Reset. We average around 5,000 Self-Service Password Resets each month. Prior to the password reset, this would have triggered a call to our Client Service Center (CSC). Dual impacts – fortified security and reduced calls to our CSC.

The migration of 30,000 state employees to home-based offices allowed us to generate savings and efficiencies not possible pre-pandemic. In DTMB alone, we cancelled more than 1,000 CISCO-based land lines. At $14.50/month, we saved more than $174,000 per year by using Microsoft Teams for communications. Other agencies have done the same and at the high-end, assuming 30,000 cancellations tied to CISCO would save over $5 million. The mix of in person and remote work has

allowed for the cancellation of 15 leases (400K sq. ft.) with annual savings of $6.8 million. For employees looking for temporary office space, we developed and launched a mobile hoteling application. Common purpose workspaces can be reserved online. The application synchronizes with Outlook to place a hold on the space. An administrative feature allows agencies to "donate" underutilized state-owned office areas. Eight state-owned building are included in the application. Multiple vendors are selling hoteling applications. Our research showed a minimum investment of $750,000 was needed for a COTS solution. This coupled with a 120-day procurement cycle compelled DTMB to in-source application development using our new Microsoft Power App and Power Automate tools in conjunction with SharePoint Office 365. Internal development costs were under $200,000.

As Michigan entered the Summer of 2022, we had many remote-capable employees working remotely part-time, with those decisions left up to individual agencies. Some agencies continue 100 percent remote, others require two days per week in the office. The fluidity of these decisions and the long-term sustainment of agency return to office policies is directly tied to remote business process innovations enabled by the Mi Modern Workplace (MWP) program.