Intelligent Automation

A Citizen-First Approach to Modernizing Services

mcci

INTRODUCTION

State and local government agencies face many challenges, including the pressure to modernize and improve citizen services, tight budgets, and increasing workloads. These problems are intensified by a shrinking workforce, resulting from retirements and workers deciding to go to organizations in private sector industries instead of the government.

Despite these issues, citizens expect the same fast and personalized service from the state and local government that they get from online retailers and commercial service providers. Intelligent automation (IA) uses AI-powered digital workers to help state and local government agencies do more with less while staying compliant.

Agencies are starting to consider artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) but are hesitant because of concerns about the perceived complexity of these new technologies and approaches, as well as how they will integrate with existing legacy technologies.

This eBook will show how state and local governments are using IA successfully to optimize citizen services while saving employees time by exploring:

CHAPTER 1

What Is Intelligent Automation?

Intelligent automation (IA) goes beyond robotic process automation (RPA). While RPA can solve small-scale operational problems, IA can scale automated processes and the digital workforce across an entire government agency to transform the way it serves citizens.

IA is business-developed, no-code automation that pushes the boundaries of RPA to deliver value across any business process in a state or local government organization. IA combines RPA with expanded cognitive and AI capabilities.

What Is a Digital Worker?

Digital workers are intelligent, super-organized multi-taskers that work within your existing systems and applications. They can be trained just like employees to bring efficiency to the processes across your organization. Digital workers start mimicking human capabilities as soon as they're trained and keep learning from humans — and your systems — as their skills continue to develop.

Building an IA Program

The goal of any state or local government organization should be to identify repetitive, manual tasks that can be taken over by AI-powered digital workers and develop automation that fulfills the needs of these use cases. Once your agency has successfully launched an automation, you can expand IA into an automation program that potentially covers hundreds of use cases.

RPA makes it easier for your agency to develop an IA program by enabling you to gain instant access to an already AI-equipped digital workforce, along with the tools you need to build and delegate automations, using a single license.

CHAPTER 2

Benefits of Intelligent Automation for State and Local Government

Automation helps organizations in state and local government deliver services faster to constituents, improving citizen trust and engagement. Both technical and non-technical government employees can harness and conduct automation initiatives. Employees can identify routine, repetitive tasks as opportunities for automation that can then be realized using digital workers.

Benefits for the Workforce

IA helps the workplace and workforce evolve by allowing employees to leverage the latest and greatest technologies, even if an agency is running legacy technologies and processes. With IA, state and local government organizations access a gateway to taking advantage of the power of AI, ML, and other new and innovative technologies, propelling agencies from legacy environments into modernized and streamlined environments.

Using AI-powered digital workers improves employee retention and recruitment efforts by reducing the number of manual daily actions employees are required to perform, freeing them up to focus more on higher-value work so their jobs are more rewarding.

Benefits for State and Local Governments and Their Citizens

IA adds value to organizations in government and the citizens they serve by:

- Enhancing citizen services
- Transforming shared services
- Improving social services
- Creating capability
- Establishing organizational agility and resilience

The next few chapters explore the ways government and law enforcement agencies that are early adopters of IA are already using it to accelerate and improve citizen services while taking the pressure off employees.

CHAPTER 3

IA in Action: How Law Enforcement and the Community Benefits

Law enforcement isn't all about investigating crimes and tracking down criminals. Policing involves filling out and processing a lot of paperwork. The 2019 Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork Annual Report found that police officers devote three or more hours per shift to paperwork.[1] The more time police officers spend on paperwork, the less time they have on the streets.

Processing paperwork involves simple, time-consuming, and repetitive tasks accomplished by several people, making it ideal for IA. To cut down on the time consumed by processing records, law enforcement agencies have begun to use IA so officers can dedicate more of their shifts to working in the community and fighting crime.

Collin County, Texas Sheriff's Office

For the Sheriff's Office in Collin County, Texas, inmate processing was slowing down the corrections system. The population in Collin County is over a million citizens, meaning it experiences a significant amount of crime. The Sheriff Office's goal was to speed up inmate processing and get officers back on the street quickly so they can continue to protect and serve.

At the time of an arrest, critical personal and charges data about the arrestee was manually entered into the officer's onboard cruiser software. Upon arrival at the jailhouse, the officer then manually transferred the same data into the jail's system as part of the end-to-end booking process. The two systems must be isolated for security and compliance purposes.

Entering and re-entering information extends the amount of time spent processing perpetrators. The time spent by the officer at the jailhouse can range anywhere from 45 minutes to 2 hours per booking.

Other opportunities for IA in law enforcement include penalty processing, intelligence reporting, crime reporting, and firearms license processing.

CHAPTER 3 (cont.)

How IA Works in Law Enforcement

"Our new digital worker, through robotic process automation, will scrape data from the records management system in the sheriff's deputy vehicle to our jail booking software."

— Collin County Sheriff's Office

With IA, a law enforcement agency can transfer data from one system to the next in a secure and compliant manner. For example, in Collin County, the digital worker gathers the data in real time from the cruiser system, and then completes the transfer of data to the jailhouse system.

This process creates the arrest entry with pertinent information and issues a notification to the jailhouse clerk that an arrestee is on the way, allowing the clerk to use the lead time provided by the digital worker to quickly perform a jail room assignment and prepare for the arrival of the arrestee. Now the officer doesn't need to spend time completing the second round of data entry to create the jailhouse system of record.

What IA Brings to Law Enforcement

Despite concerns about excluding officers from some aspects of policing, IA augments the police force by creating a machine/human interaction. UCLA Law Review wrote that automating law enforcement processes might deskill police officers, essentially excluding them from key functions.[2] However, officers are still needed to do their jobs.

When officers spend all their time doing paperwork, they don't have time to handle what matters. For example, across Collin County, with an average of nearly ten arrests per day, seven days a week, 365 days per year, officers can return almost 4,000 hours of value-added time to the community they serve and protect. Officers also benefit from being able to focus on high-value, rewarding tasks that involve complex reasoning.

CHAPTER 3 (cont.)

How IA Works in Law Enforcement

> "For over a decade, this has been a persistent problem for us, and we're thrilled to have a solution, finally."

Not only do digital workers save time, but they prevent errors from entering the system. Officers don't need to enter information into multiple databases, so there is less chance for error. IA brings consistency and compliance to law enforcement procedures.

CHAPTER 4

IA in Action: A Solution for Top Unemployment Processing Challenges

CNBC reported that, in September of 2020, the long-term unemployment rate in the U.S. rose to 2.4 million, a record high for the COVID-19 pandemic.[3] State unemployment agencies are struggling to keep up with the demand.

IA streamlines back-office tasks, allowing unemployment processes to be completed faster and more accurately, eliminating fraud and creating a better experience for applicants.

The Pressure for Faster Claims Processing

State unemployment agencies are under a lot of pressure to process claims quickly. The challenges people have had trying to apply for unemployment benefits have added to the stress of losing jobs during the pandemic. The unemployed rely on their benefits to keep their heads above water by paying rent, keeping utilities on, and buying groceries. When faced with long wait times and systems prone to shutdowns, applicants complain publicly on social media, local, and national news.

State unemployment agencies have trouble with backlogs and issuing timely payments. Back-end processing of unemployment applications is often manual, labor-intensive, and filled with bottlenecks. For example, many states still use mailers to verify loss of employment, delaying processing by at least a few days.

As a result, some people who get laid off don't get their benefits for months. Applicants may spend hours or even days trying to get a call through to a person to address their concerns.

States also experience fraud from people applying who aren't qualified. According to Bloomberg Law, 11 states have reported an increase in fraudulent unemployment claims during the pandemic. Increased application volume and the pressure to process claims quickly make catching fraud challenging.[4]

IA can solve these problems by replacing manual processes with workflows carried out by digital workers. These digital workers speed up processes and verify the identity of applicants to prevent fraud.

CHAPTER 4 (cont.)

Three Positive Outcomes IA Creates for Unemployment Agencies

1. Increased accuracy

The state needs to calculate maximum allowed benefits for unemployment applicants. These calculations are complex and require pulling figures from many documents. Making accurate calculations takes the time and expertise of a claims processor.

To calculate these benefits, the state must look at what applicants earned when they were employed. To do this, the unemployment agency needs to examine tax statements, extract gross income from them, and quarter out this income to estimate what applicants are eligible for and what bracket they fall into.

IA is ideally suited to extracting information and performing complex calculations, unburdening claims processors of this work. Digital Workers can make financial calculations quickly and accurately without the need for human intervention.

2. Fraud prevention

To avoid fraud, unemployment agencies must put every applicant through a process of identity verification, which requires a third-party system.

For example, for driver's license verification, a clerk needs to go to the third-party system to vet applicants to determine that they are residents of the state. However, the clerk must manually type in information before running a search.

With IA, the digital worker extracts data automatically and then goes to the third-party system. If the clerk just feeds the license into the system, it will process to generate output instantaneously. Verifying an applicant's identity with IA takes time pressure off human workers and reduces the chance that a fraudulent application will slip through.

Three Positive Outcomes IA Creates for Unemployment Agencies

3. Speed of verification

After wage verification has been processed, some claims must go through a second process of independent wage verification, adding time to the overall application process. When the unemployment office sends out a letter, the constituent can protest it. At this point, applicants may supply supporting documents that were missed during the first wage verification process.

When a discrepancy occurs, a digital worker can examine the document and assign the case to the right person. Digital workers can also send a notification, improving communication with employees and constituents. If new calculations need to be made, a digital worker can make calculations for those quarters.

Accelerating this independent wage verification process and contacting applicants helps take some of the burden off human workers and cultivates much-needed goodwill between the unemployment agency and the public.

Identifying More IA Use Cases

These IA unemployment application use cases are the tip of the iceberg for state agencies. The pandemic has awakened the industry to the need for IA, but establishing an automation program means uncovering more opportunities for digital workflows.

For example, COVID victims are recovering, but recovery can be slow. People who haven't recovered entirely may be applying for SSI benefits. IA can help streamline this process during a time of increased demand and can also be used for routine HR onboarding processes.

CHAPTER 5

IA in Action: A Quick Response to Police Reform Legislation

The Westminster Police Department in Colorado had been using Laserfiche for document management since 2002. Creating of documents could be a tedious process, and filling out reports lacked consistency, but overall, file management was running smoothly.

However, on June 19, 2020, Colorado legislators signed the Law Enforcement Integrity and Accountability Act into law. This act, which goes into effect in 2023, will allow a person who has a constitutional right under the state's bill of rights to bring civil action against a peace officer if they feel their rights have been infringed upon.[5] For police throughout Colorado, this act means departments must tighten up their procedures, report filing, record keeping, compliances, and more.

The Challenges

For the Westminster Police Department, the biggest challenge in complying with the Law Enforcement Integrity and Accountability Act was the need to sunset their current legacy system. Although the department had started to do some clean-up and organization, the old Laserfiche system just couldn't handle the workload.

Up to 500,000 arrest records and incident reports needed to be moved over, which contained information on the incident, the case record, the summary of the case, and the record file, often generating hundreds of pages for one single report.

Much of the information needed to generate reports was housed in different locations throughout the network. All of it had to survive the migration to the new system and be reorganized in a centralized place that would allow for easy access of information and the quick gathering of reports.

Lastly, the Westminster Police Department was using a 32-bit legacy system, while modern systems are 64-bit systems. Moving code from these two different applications can cause data to be mangled, resulting in frequent errors and creating problems with supporting hardware and software capacities.

CHAPTER 5 (cont.)

The Solution: Laserfiche and IA

The fact that the Westminster Police Department was already using Laserfiche for digital filing was a bonus for transferring data, as Laserfiche would also be the new system of record. However, the new system would incorporate the full scale of Laserfiche capabilities and eliminate all the police department's data silos.

With IA, the Westminster Police Department was able to migrate all data off its old legacy systems and onto the new system. The benefits of IA included less manual oversight during migration, manual validation of data, and being able to leverage a digital worker as needed.

The Benefits

By not needing to develop a new system for migration, MCCi brought significant cost savings to the department. IA also reduced labor hours needed during migration. What may have taken several months now only took weeks, ultimately saving the Westminster Police Department about three times the cost of migration without IA.

MCCi was happy to assist the Westminster Police Department with the creation of unique, customizable forms that adhere to department protocols via Laserfiche. Standardized entry and required fields were laid out cleanly to avoid going back and forth within the form. Dropdown menus for an address or cross street save an officer's time.

These forms were made available via an online portal for field or office entry on the department's network. Officers could fill out the forms remotely, whether in their cars, on their personal computer, or on their department-issued cellphones.

Mobile devices and desktop computers had shortcuts to make data entry even easier. Once the online form was complete, the submit button finished the job, capturing the submitted information along with everything that's needed for the contact sheet. When a chief needed access to a file or report, a simple search would pull it up.

CONCLUSION

Leveraging IA for State and Local Government

With IA, state and local government can use digital workers to free up employees and give your agency the tools you need to transform citizen services. MCCi and helps state and local government agencies find new ways to keep pace with evolving missions and citizen expectations, even with aging technology.

We bridge the gap between legacy systems and modern cloud, IA, and AI to deliver business transformation that complies with key governance requirements for auditability, security, and compliance.

MCCi can demonstrate how to put IA and digital workers into practice. We are a consulting company with expertise in Business Process Automation and we provide our clients with leading hyperautomation technologies.

More than 1,300 organizations trust MCCi as their IT services partner and believe that strong relationships and talented people lead to successful outcomes. We have improved the services they provide to citizens and transformed the way they operate so they can continue to lead in their field well into the future.

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SOURCES

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