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RegDigPilot Program

**Digital Transformation
for Local Government**



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Data Science

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Background

The Government of South Africa has identified that the fourth industrial revolution will have huge implications on the economy of South Africa. In January 2019, the South African Minister of Finance indicated that the country needs to prepare itself for the fourth industrial revolution and that the budget will include issues such as overhauling previously underprivileged schools and investment in digital and technological skills.

In order to facilitate a plan of action, Government has established a commission to organize a 'national response action plan to deal with the fourth industrial revolution'. The President of South Africa has indicated that:

“Our prosperity as a nation depends on our ability to take full advantage of rapid technological change. This means that we urgently need to develop our capabilities in the areas of science, technology and innovation.”

South African cities have been facing challenges since democratization to meet the expectations of the citizens. The challenges have included fraud and corruption, financial constraints, lack of service delivery and technological progress, amongst others, which were underpinned by weak leadership and governance processes.

The digital transformation of public administration is expected to fundamentally reshape the institutional setting of local service delivery, administration, and governance in South Africa. In an era characterized by rapid modernization, increased constituent expectations, shrinking budgets, and unpredictable outside disruptions, local governments' reliance on arcane paper-based processes drains its scarce resources and limits its ability to fully serve constituents. From the perspective of attracting investors into cities, South African cities have much to accomplish in terms of digitalization. The World Bank's (sub-national) 'Doing Business (SNDB) in South Africa' report has identified a number of critical issues for the metropolitan municipalities, including the eThekweni Municipality, in terms of the efficiencies of doing business within the Municipality. The main areas which are focused on in the SNDB assessment are efficacies of construction permits, getting electricity and registering property. One of the findings identified in the study revealed that many municipalities use a manual paper-based method to control construction permit applications, and only a handful of municipalities have begun the digital revolution process. The City of Cape Town is the only metropolitan municipality that uses an electronic system, and although eThekweni Municipality is one of the other metropolitan municipalities which expressed interest in moving towards an electronic platform, it will require commitment, cost-benefit analysis and further exchanges to be implemented (World Bank 2018).

Constituent Experience

Improves Convenience

Consumers in modern age society are accustomed to the ease of shopping, ordering food, booking travel, banking, and more all from their screens. They expect to be able to conduct business online. Paperless processes provide constituents with on-demand access to applications, information and other services that traditionally require a trip to city hall. By digitizing operations, governments can more efficiently process claims, applications and license requests, resulting in higher constituent satisfaction.

Promotes Transparency

Automated workflows promote transparency by automatically notifying constituents as each step of a government process is completed. Placing information in publicly searchable databases also saves government agencies time and money spent complying with open data requests.

Efficiency and Productivity

Saves Employees Time

When documents are stored in the cloud instead of in physical files, employees save time requesting documents from other departments, searching for misplaced reports and physically updating files. Inconveniences such as having to print notes from a meeting and physically deliver them to absentee coworkers can be eliminated through digital workflows.

When an inspector visits a property, he or she can view and update the property's file in real time via a mobile device. This cuts time needed to enter the data later and because the document is located in the cloud, all departments have immediate access to the updated information.

Automates Tasks

Document management automation cuts steps from a project's journey to produce quicker results of a higher quality. Digital workflows enable government employees to track a project's progress, automatically notify the correct people once a milestone is reached and create reminders so tasks are not stalled due to interdepartmental miscommunication. Digital forms, filled out by the public and employees, automatically populate databases with information, reducing the need for manual data entry.

Data is Accessible

With cloud storage, files can be located through simple queries, rather than through hours spent rummaging through civic archives. Case workers can access and update files from their mobile devices. Property-specific data can be retrieved in real time from the municipality's GIS platform, ensuring that every department has access to the most current information. Reports and analysis can automatically be generated in a matter of clicks.

Unifies Departments

With centralized documents, all departments work together from the same information. Data and information silos are eliminated. Employees across all departments can access, manage and make decisions based on current and accurate data. The incidence of costly human error is reduced and communication bottlenecks are removed, facilitating seamless interdepartmental collaboration.

Business Continuity

Improves Cyber Security

In 2019, hackers shut down the cyber network of Johannesburg City Council, targeting computers of local government employees in South Africa's economic hub. The hackers allegedly demanded ransom in the form of bitcoins in exchange for reactivating internet and email links to the city's billing systems, local media reported. The City of Johannesburg said it could not confirm the authenticity of the ransom demand and that its forensic and IT units were investigating the attack.

On-site servers are expensive to maintain and difficult to secure, and they've become the favorite target of cyber criminals who utilize ransomware to extract large sums of money from local governments. By transitioning to a cloud-based environment, records are stored securely and backed up several times per day. Maintenance and security costs are also eliminated, as the cloud provider becomes responsible for cybersecurity.

Enables Remote Work & Business Continuity

On the 11th of March, 2020, Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). Since then, Covid-19 has upturned the whole world. One of the transformations linked to the pandemic is the nature and future of work. As a result of lockdowns and social distancing guidelines meant to prevent the spread of Covid-19, remote forms of working became a necessity aimed at protecting employees' health and safety. However, the nature of work during the current pandemic, the trajectory of which remains at best uncertain until an effective vaccine can be mass-produced and made available, varies from one country to another. This is particularly the case in countries of the Global South where the digital divide and uneven information and communications technology (ICT) penetration, distribution, and reach remain pertinent issues and are even more pronounced across the urban-rural divide.

From the mundane to the truly catastrophic, disruptions are bound to happen. Whether a blizzard or flood that closes roads making it impossible for employees to drive to the office, or a global pandemic which forces a months-long remote work policy, local governments must be able to operate regardless. If government offices are closed, can services continue to be delivered? Can constituents submit applications? Would paper documents and files be safe in the event of a fire or flood? In an age of increased and more destructive natural disasters, local governments are the first to respond. Business continuity and responsiveness is critical. Forego paper and securely store critical information in the cloud. Enable employees to access crucial data, from any location, through any device, at any time. Digital transformation is a critical component of resilience.

Revenue & Budget Friendly

Cuts Costs

Digital document management eliminates the cost of printing and mailing documents to citizens. Online payment options also reduce transactions' processing costs. Increased productivity resulting from digitization defers cost over the workforce. Finally, the transition from on-site server-based platforms to cloud-based platforms can reduce maintenance and security costs.

Generate Unrealized Revenue

With records digitized and easily analyzed, employees can find opportunities to increase revenue for the budget. For examples, there are there 2,000 registered pet owners in your city? Pull a report and email a link for a R250 annual renewal payment each year - which residents will be able to pay directly through your website. That's R500,000 added to the budget.

Saves Space

Save on storage! A cloud-based storage system requires no physical space. Papers and documents that are legally required to be stored for a period year, can be stored in the cloud, rather than in rows of filing cabinets in office basements.

The Digital Transformation Process

The term, Digital Transformation is everywhere these days. Across industries the term is applied differently and often is in reference to technologies ranging from IT infrastructure, to big data, to machine learning and AI. Generally speaking, however, Digital Transformation marks a radical rethinking of how an organization uses technology, people and processes to fundamentally change business performance.

It is important to remember that digital transformation is a journey. It does not happen all at once or overnight. It happens in steps and phases as new technology is implemented and continually improved, as employees are trained and adopt new IT systems, and as organizational culture shifts from manual processes to digital systems. RegDigPilot and our implementation or onboarding process, has been designed to make a transition to digital government as smooth and straightforward as possible.

New Technology

Over the last decade, a wide range of industries have replaced their paper-based processes with digital applications, to incredible effect. Importantly for governments, removing paper processes promotes efficiency and productivity. Files are stored in the cloud, safe from cyber and physical threats. The ubiquity of WIFI and mobile devices means that data can be accessed and updated by employees at any time, from anywhere. Time previously spent locating paper files and performing data entry can be dedicated to addressing higher level matters. Services can be rendered to constituents quickly and transparently.

Of all sectors, government may have the most to gain from investing in new technology and going paperless. Local governments, subject to frequent budget cuts and restrictions on revenue generation, can conserve scant resources and even boost productivity through



digitization. Digitization can also improve relations with a constituent base growing increasingly accustomed to immediate, 24/7 service as a standard component of the customer experience. Ultimately, cloud-based government management platforms are capable of delivering the flexibility, security, and affordability that local governments require to improve both constituent services and budgets.

Interested in learning more?

Our Solutions Specialists are ready to speak with you about your government's current processes and needs, and make recommendations that are specifically tailored to your local government. Schedule a FREE consultation. **Let's talk!**

Partners & Clients

