

Using SharpCloud to Break Down Strategic Planning Barriers in Washington



CLIENT

Washington Technology
Solutions (WaTech)

CHALLENGE

Needed a way to do strategic
planning visually, while also
providing thorough
background information
and artifacts.

SOLUTION

SharpCloud



The Story

There are more than 550 employees at Washington Technology Solutions (WaTech). It's their job to provide a streamlined, agile, central IT organization that empowers other government agencies to better serve their constituents. The state of Washington created WaTech in 2015 as a way to consolidate technology services into a single agency. Since then, they have been operating the state's core technology infrastructure and continually innovating for their clients. These include state agencies and nonprofits as well as county, city, and tribal governments.

With so many employees and moving parts, it is challenging yet critical to make sure everyone is on the same page. This job falls to Dan Mercer, Chief Technology Officer at WaTech. He needed a tool for strategic planning and roadmapping. It needed to be visually appealing, be able to show relationships between people and projects, and present program timelines. In addition, Mercer needed something that could link to supporting documentation and be easily updated by more than one person. His solution? SharpCloud.

SharpCloud is a presentation and strategy software that allows the user to arrange data into engaging, visual stories. Mercer sees it as the answer to the challenge of mapping out projects and organizations so that others can see and understand the complex connections between them. He appreciates how it facilitates constant collaboration and can be updated by any number of users. Finally, he and his coworkers are able to attach an unlimited amount of content to build their story, from documents to videos, all in one seamless experience.

By using SharpCloud, Dan Mercer has created a better strategic roadmap for WaTech. "The number one question was always, 'what's your roadmap?'" said Mercer. "SharpCloud is engaging enough to where people go out and look at it. The intended audiences are actually going to the tool and getting the information. Before it was more of a chore."

Mercer said he is also getting a lot of significant interest in SharpCloud from other areas within his agency, many of which had viewed planning and roadmaps as a burden. He said that SharpCloud is "lowering the barriers to being able to spread the culture of strategic planning to other areas of the agency."



"The thing that's good about SharpCloud," Mercer said, "is that it lets us attach artifacts behind the visual. You can put as much depth and documentation as you need to." In the past, Mercer used several different tools to try and piece together everything he needed in his roadmap, but he said it did not provide enough depth. "SharpCloud lets you drill into all the details," said Mercer.

Critical to working with a varied constituency, SharpCloud allows users to show different views to different audiences without having to create separate presentations. Data can be viewed through multiple lenses and pulled from multiple sources. Users no longer need to re-enter all of the data. Instead, it can be acquired from existing spreadsheets or pulled in from other databases or business systems.

WaTech's use of SharpCloud has made its strategic planning easier and more visible to its many constituents. Being able to visually represent the relationships between its programs and projects makes roadmapping easier and provides more government transparency. When asked about how SharpCloud will be used in the future, Mercer mentions disaster planning, policy mapping, and technical architecture. Then he pauses and adds, "your imagination is your only limit."