



Empowering Public Service with Workflow Automation

How Workflow Automation Will Liberate Governments and Constituents Alike

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The Problem of Public (Dis)service

Imagine you're a regular citizen in line at the local DMV or County Clerk's office, standing in line, tapping your foot in impatience or frustration. Does that person realize that the people on the other side of that service counter are acutely aware of the inefficiencies, mistakes, mis-routings and mis-filings that go on in government departments? Especially departments still using paper-based workflows?

The ordinary citizen has got one advantage over government employees: After they've picked up their new license or permit, they can leave. The workers are stuck there.

For government managers and employees and the public they serve, outmoded processes aren't merely inconvenient or inefficient. They can actually be a drain on the spirit, security and safety of those communities, because they impair the quality of service that public servants can deliver.

Let's examine how workflow automation can solve the efficiency and responsiveness challenges con-fronting governments and communities, and make governments better prepared to deal with the real work they're prefer to address: delivered a helping hand to the public.

When IDC surveyed 1,500 owners of document-based processes, they discovered how 58% of constituent-faced processes and 48% of back-office processes were driven by paper-based workflows. Only 36% of the study's respondents thought these processes were efficient and effective.

The Manual Process Morale Killer

Contrary to what some say about government employees – that they're indifferent bureaucrats who are only in public service so they can enjoy civil service job security – the majority of them are just like more other people in any other workplace. They're dedicated to their work, to their customers (a.k.a., their fellow citizens), and take pride in doing a good job.

When a clunky, error-prone process consistently gets in the way of that commitment, employee morale takes a hit. The tedium of endlessly-repeated, uninspiring tasks, and the operational glitches they contend with every day, would be enough to grind down any of us. The fact government employees in some ante-diluvian departments even show up in the morning is a tribute to their grit and dedication.

Those same processes also wear on the public, too. They build a gulf between government and the governed, and sow distrust and disillusionment.

Deadly (Dull) Numbers

Let's start with one of the most glaring inefficiencies of old-school government processes: paperwork. The figures below give dimension to the frustration many people have with government processes and the perceived failings of "bureaucracy".

- The U.S. Office of Management and Budget estimates that the U.S. government requires individuals and companies to spend about nine billion hours (that's about 38 hours per adult) filling out paperwork each year.

When a clunky, error-prone process gets in the way of commitment, employee morale takes a hit.



- The period needed to obtain permits can be quite lengthy. In California, it takes 6 weeks to process an application to become a guard, locksmith employee, alarm agent, repo person or private security officer.
- Want to open a business in Avondale, AZ? Permit processing will take 10-15 business days, and will “take longer to process because the application must be reviewed and approved by multiple departments, including the Fire and Medical, Development Engineering Services and Police.”
- DMV.com conducted a study, quite sensibly, of the time one must spend in line at the DMV. The average wait time in the five most populous states was 39 minutes, while the average in the five least populous states went up (counterintuitively, you’d think), to 46 minutes.



Inefficiency Damages Trust

The delays and inefficiencies of hidebound bureaucracies aren't necessarily central to the problems that governments and institutions have experienced in maintaining public trust, but they certainly don't help.

When an inefficient government organization or agency gets scant results from the taxpayer dollars they spend, they're exacerbating the problem. They're also increasingly being put on notice by voters and watch-dog groups ready to take them to task.

One example of how this can play out over the long term:

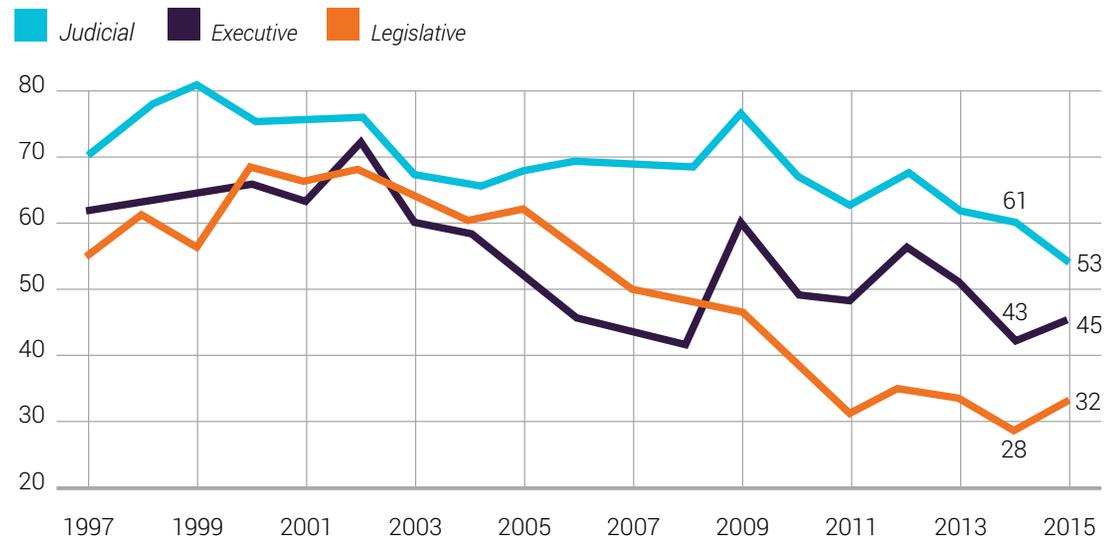
- In 1995, Business Week reported that while inflation-adjusted expenditures on each public school student had risen by 25% over ten years, performance figures for those students had hardly moved.
- Only 52¢ of every dollar spent in a typical large school system reached the classroom.
- Unsurprisingly, an accountability movement arose over the next two decades aimed at achieving better results through tactics like standardized testing, despite the objections of public school administrators and unions.

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Reversing a decline in confidence

As Gallup found in surveying American's attitudes toward government, trust in the three branches of the federal government has steadily declined over the years. The size and waste we perceive in Washington certainly contribute to that lack of faith. State governments fare better, but Gallup says we reserve our real confidence for the locals.

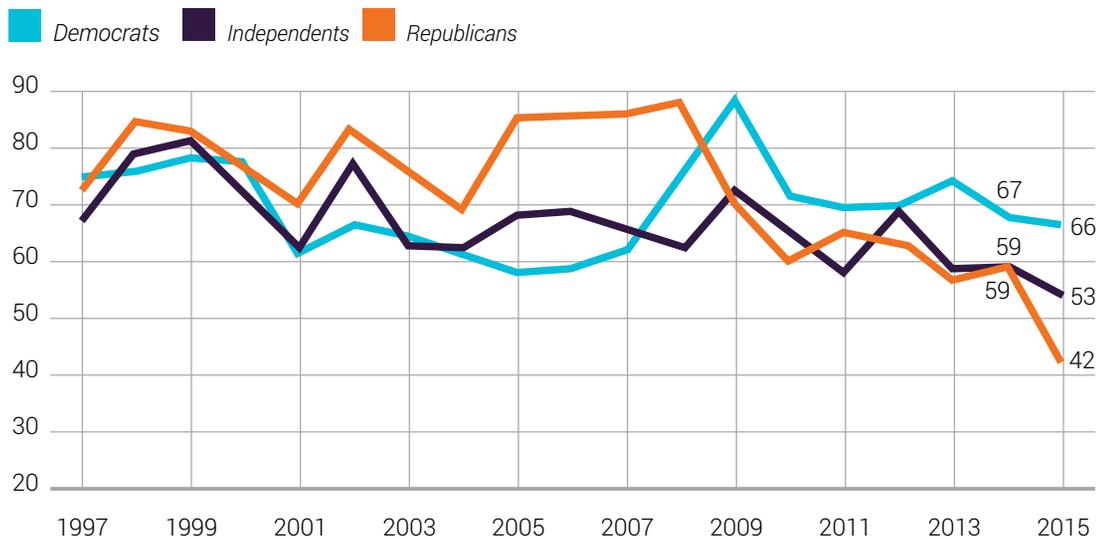
Americans' Trust in the Three Branches of the Federal Government
Recent trend | Figures are percentages expressing 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' of trust



Source: GALLUP

For the past 15 years, Americans have expressed more confidence in their local government than their state government to handle problems. Similar to polls since 2013, about seven in 10 (71%) say they have a "great deal" or a "fair amount" of trust in local government to handle problems, compared with about six in 10 (62%) who say the same for their state government.

Trust in the Judicial Branch of the Federal Government, by Political Party
Recent trend | Figures are percentages expressing 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' of trust



Source: GALLUP

Restoring this trust will demand a serious makeover of entrenched processes and bureaucracies, and technology is seen as a springboard for improvement.

The U.S. Congress has been trying to take the lead, recently re-introducing the Modernizing Government Technology Act (MGTA), intended to update the systems and processes behind Federal operations.

As one of its bipartisan sponsors, Representative Will Hurd (R-Texas) explained, "The federal government spends \$80 billion each year on IT systems and 80 percent of which is spent maintaining outdated, legacy systems. Our government needs to be able to introduce cutting edge technology into their networks to improve operational efficiency and decrease operational cost. The MGT Act does just that."

"Smart Cities" Will Need Workflow Automation

On the more local level, the "smart cities" movement that's taking hold, not merely in the U.S. but globally, envisions communities where infrastructure, municipal services, urban planning, and resources are interconnected.

The citizenry benefits by receiving better governance and service, in everything from public safety to mobility and healthcare.

For a "smart city" to succeed, however, its back-end operations can't be handicapped by out-moded processes. It would be hard to reconcile such modernity and efficiency with the idea of hundreds of government workers shuffling old-school paperwork.

Thus, workflow automation is a requisite first step in evolving toward smarter, more efficient and secure communities, where there's a vibrant sense of unity, trust and collaboration between public service pro-fessionals and the citizenry.

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Welcome to Automated Public Service

By putting paper-based processes out to pasture with workflow automation, you free government operations and employees from the burden of boredom that ultimately takes a toll on the communities they service. You remove the pain of the mundane, and bring joy back into the work environment.

Let's walk through just of the points in a public service process where transforming outmoded manual processes into automated ones makes a difference.

In a hypothetical burg we'll call SimpliVille*, a constituent wants to report how a vacant lot up their street has become overgrown and choked with dumped junk.

1. Our concerned citizen goes to the town's website to use an online self-service form that guides them through the process of filling it out and submitting it for action. Already, we've spared town employees the problems of dealing with one more person waiting in line at Town Hall, or directing him or her to the right form. Plus, the digital form is error-free, since it can't be submitted until all fields are properly filled.
2. Once submitted, the form is automatically routed to the right parties for review and approval. No mail carts or in-baskets required. Moreover, if more than one person needs to review the request, the workflow can be designed to automatically forward it to the next

*Where they've adopted a workflow automation platform like our own SimpliGov solutions, if you'll forgive the plug.

person in the review chain. The repetitious process of making workers manually route forms for approval, then chase down those approvals later is eliminated.

3. Automated notifications and reminders ensure everyone involved in the workflow knows when the request is ready for review, and prods them into action. They won't sandbag on it, either, because the platform's dashboard allows their managers to check on how timely each employee is being about doing their part of the job.
4. The constituent, meanwhile, can receive a digital notification that their request is being handled, and even can be alerted when it's been fulfilled.
5. Once the cleanup request is approved, it can trigger another workflow directing a SimpliVille Streets & Sanitation team to get to work.
6. What if there's a reason to later audit this process? It's simple, since the entire workflow, including documents, has been automatically archived.

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How Government & Public Will Gain

In a digital, mobile, Cloud-powered world, constituents are demanding governments give them the same types of responsiveness, transparency and personalized service they're already receiving from brands and marketers. Why shouldn't they? Though automation, those gains are attainable today.

For the caseworker dealing with 50 clients, for the maintenance chief who'd rather be out in the field, or for any government worker who want to focus on work rather than paperwork, workflow automation can change their experience of public service for the better. That, of course, is great news for the public they serve.

Some of the many administrative benefits of workflow automation for government:

- Enhanced responsiveness, as the response time and reliability of government operations in our "SimpliVille" ratchet up thanks to the speed and precision of automated workflows.
- Savings, in employee time/wage hours and materials, among other areas. An IDC study of government respondents revealed they felt they could reduce their overall costs by 9% if they could solve the workflow problems plaguing their constituent-facing processes.
- Analytics are delivered that government managers can use to continuously improve processes and services by having in-depth understanding of what's going on, and how to apply resources.

- Risk avoidance, since increased transparency helps keep procurement and investment processes more compliant and governable.
- Safeguarding for archives and important documents, which are now digitized in the Cloud and recoverable in the event of disaster.
- Morale and higher retention levels among employees, since automating those tedious and repetitious tasks frees them up to do the work they're really energized and engaged by: servicing the community.

The citizens of our hypothetical SimpliVille are all kinds of happy.

The public's experience evolves

Thanks to the wisdom of city managers in adopting a workflow automation platform to optimize the town's operational processes, the citizens of our hypothetical SimpliVille are all kinds of happy, thanks to the benefits they've directly experienced:

- They're happier taxpayers, as the cost savings workflow automation delivers can get passed along to them in lower taxes, or applied to improving services.
- Accessing services has become convenient since online self-service forms and automated processes mean they can avoid lining up at a city office, or having to hear those dreaded words, "Let me put you on hold," or "I'm going to try to transfer you to that department. If you get dropped, call back."
- Around-the-clock responsiveness to service requests is now viable with process automation, with automated notifications to assure citizens they're been heard.
- Businesses benefit, since permitting processes and other interactions with city agencies are faster and more accurate.

- Everybody is better informed since forms, instructions, diagrams, infographics and various other materials can be made available online, and are can be much more effective than just talking to a city staffer (assuming he or she picks up that transferred call, of course).
- Their personal data is better protected than in paper-based systems, where mislaid forms and documents are common.
- They're happier voters, always a consideration, particularly since greater transparency and accountability around government services are now a fact of life at SimpliVille Town Hall.



Adoption Checklists

The benefits of workflow automation for government:

- ✓ **Optimized Efficiency:** So governments can replace manually-intensive labor-intensive, error-prone processes.
- ✓ **Cost Containment:** One example? Labor-intensive phone calls or email replies are eliminated via automation.
- ✓ **Boosted Morale:** Freed of repetitive tasks, employees can focus on more important tasks.
- ✓ **Accelerated Responsiveness:** Online self-service forms and process automation make service requests executable 24/7.
- ✓ **Improved Compliance & Trust:** Via dashboards and automatic archiving, workflows are managed in real time and permanently preserved for audit.
- ✓ **Greater Transparency & Trust:** Automated access to documents and visibility into government operations builds trust with the public.
- ✓ **Better Personal Data Protection:** Citizens' personal data can be kept more secure in digital workflow environments.
- ✓ **Scalability:** SaaS-based platforms can scale to demand volume, even during peak load times that would swamp traditional channels.
- ✓ **Actionable Insights:** Digital analytics about users and service demands empowers more accurate planning and responses.

What governments should require from a workflow automation platform:

- ✓ **Flexible Deployment:** Able to work as a Cloud-based, on-prem, Multi-Cloud or hybrid solution.
- ✓ **Easy Integration** with current systems – with no need to rip and replace.
- ✓ **Simplicity of Adoption on and Use**, not requiring you to write custom code or call for IT assistance.
- ✓ **Mobile-Ready and Responsive** for field teams and remote workers.
- ✓ Best-in-class **e-Signature Solutions**.
- ✓ **Scalability** to quickly respond to peak loads or unplanned spikes in demand.
- ✓ **A Graphical Drag-and-Drop UI** – so designing forms and workflows is quick and simple.
- ✓ **Centralized Workflow Data Storage** in a single repository, empowering access, auditing and digital governance.
- ✓ **High Visibility** into each workflow through management dashboards.
- ✓ **Proven Customer Support** that helps with customization and innovation after installation.
- ✓ **Multilingual Support** so users can choose the language of their choice for reading & completing forms.

Summary

All that's missing, once workflow automation has been added to government operations?

Paper jams (whether they're clogging printers or processes). Errors. Delays. Constituents standing in long lines tapping their anxious feet. Dead trees. Material and labor costs. Workplace tedium. Employee disillusionment and attrition. Community frustration.

The diversity of our communities – socially, economically and otherwise – and the diversity of demands they'll put on government are going to keep multiplying. Regardless of whether or not the “smart cities” of tomorrow ever take shape, there are already tools at hand to meet today's needs, while laying the ground- work for effectively managing the communities of tomorrow.

Workflow automation is perhaps the most essential of those tools. It's ready to not only solve today's issues, but to help launch and sustain the very necessary digital transformation every government will have to embrace.



About SimpliGov

At SimpliGov, we free your workplace from the “pain of the mundane” by providing workflow automation solutions that liberate people from outmoded, repetitive, error-prone manual workflows, so they can focus on being truly productive and engaged with delivering better public service.

Our government customers testify about how the SimpliGov’s workflow automation solutions have transformed their workflows and processes so they’re faster, more efficient and error-free.

SimpliGov provides you with easy-to-use drag-and-drop form and process-building tools, seamless API integration with other systems, customization to your exact needs, and the help of the most collaborative support team imaginable.

By using SimpliGov, you wind up with smarter workflows, centralized control of your optimized public service processes, and immediate ROI.

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