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Public Sector Rises to Remote Work Challenge

Federal, state and local agencies embrace digital technologies to ensure seamless delivery of essential services

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FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. – July 6, 2020 – There was a time in the public sector when working from home was a special privilege offered to a select few employees. Then COVID-19 hit. As governments issued shelter-in-place orders, declared states of emergency, closed schools and mandated social distancing, remote work became the only way many agencies could continue to deliver essential services. While the speed with which they were required to enable it presented challenges, new research conducted by GovLoop on behalf of Citrix Systems, Inc. (NASDAQ:CTXS), reveals that a majority have risen to the occasion, leveraging digital technologies to keep their employees engaged, productive and safe and their operations running.

The New Normal

"The global pandemic has greatly accelerated the shift toward digital government and promises to change the culture of how agencies at all levels work," said Steve Nguyen, Vice President of Public Sector, Citrix. "Remote work is the new normal and will drive the next normal."

The Next Normal

How prepared is the public sector to accommodate this? To find out, Citrix and GovLoop surveyed 800 government employees in March to understand what kinds of remote work measures the agencies they work for had in place, the tools they had been given to work from home and the challenges they faced in doing so.

The Right Tools

On the technology front, the vast majority of respondents – 71 percent - said their agencies provided the tools and equipment they need to do their jobs, including:

- Government-issued laptops, tablets or smartphones (81 percent)
- Government-issued mobile devices (43 percent)
- VPNs (70 percent)
- Cloud-based applications/data (50 percent)
- Remote PCs and remote PC access (28 percent)
- Virtual desktops (21 percent)
- Secure integrated workspace solutions (11 percent)

- Desktop-as-a-service (4 percent)

A Secure Experience

Roughly 40 percent of respondents said they use personal laptops, tablets or smartphones for work, and 57 percent indicated that they felt confident in doing so as their agencies were able to enforce existing security measures to ensure their devices and data are safe.

A Challenging Environment

Remote work is anything but normal. And despite the fact that they have the tools they need to do their jobs from the safety of their homes in a secure manner, many workers are struggling to adapt. When asked what they saw as the biggest cultural challenge to working effectively from home, respondents cited:

- Maintaining performance and productivity (26 percent)

- Loss of face-to-face interactions (26 percent)

- Ensuring effective interpersonal communications (26 percent)

- Loss of shared purpose/team spirit (8 percent)

- Lack of trust (8 percent)

Making Remote Work Work

This is where government agencies can step up. Basic digital skills are critical for employees who work remotely. Ensuring that everyone knows how to use collaboration tools such as video conferencing, for instance, is essential to business continuity, and can also help minimize the negative impact that the loss of face-to-face interactions have by making people feel more connected and engaged.

Additionally, it is important to set realistic goals and expectations when it comes to productivity. It is impossible to expect the same levels from those working from home with children or roommates, or those without reliable internet access, for example.

"There are a lot of emotional needs going on during this time period," Nguyen said. "The more agencies can minimize the risks they can control, the more relieved employees will feel in an already stressful situation."

Citrix Customer Engagement Specialist Chris Voce agrees. "At the business level, productivity is the sum of individuals' progress. If you demonstrate care for your employee's experience — their safety, progress and wellbeing — they'll reward you with the innovation and discretionary effort to find solutions to seemingly impossible problems and carry your organization through this time," he said.

Citrix builds the secure, digital workspace technology that helps businesses unlock human potential, improve employee experience and drive the flexible models that will drive work in the future, including offerings uniquely tailored to the public sector. Click here to learn more the company's solutions and the value they can provide.