Digitalisation of citizen services for a UK Council

Microland's client is the third largest borough in London comprising seven towns. The local government council is the authoritative body for this borough and ensures easy access to public services for its citizens across housing, recycling, parking, transport, taxes, libraries, parks, schools and more.

Serving a population of approximately 400,000, the local council has 10+ citizen service categories and has over 220 business processes defined to deliver the service. These processes are supported by an application estate that has grown over the years and has several legacy estate challenges including not able to meet the expectation of customers to have a great engagement while availing the services from the borough. Additionally, this disparate set of applications with several databases has resulted in a complex application estate, thereby increasing the operational costs and decreasing overall agility and responsiveness.

As the number of services offered and population of the borough continued to rise the strain on the application estate became untenable. To resolve the challenges, the council decided to transform and digitalize their citizen service processes. The objectives of this transformation program included cost savings to align spend in line with the funding reduction, re-engineering processes to be citizen centric, ensure single-pane visibility of all services consumed by a citizen and modernising & simplification of the application estate.

The key initiative involved designing and building a new Case and Service management platform that could deliver all services that citizens consumed across various channels. While introducing new technologies and platforms is an enabler, the end goal was transforming the council's manual processes, optimizing them, and building out their digital roadmap. The client needed an end-to-end transformation partner to guide them through the digitalization program. Microland's expertise in Microsoft products and solutions and business process re-engineering skills made it an easy choice for the client to select Microland for this key program.

The program began with a detailed assessment of the council's 200+ business processes and the vast hybrid infrastructure estate comprising 140 applications, several versions of SQL & Oracle databases involving 200+ TB of storage deployed across a computing infrastructure located in two on-premise data centers and an Azure environment. Deep diving into the processes provided a perspective of the extent of manual processes that were involved and designing automation solutions for these.

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info@microland.com
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The first phase of the program involved digitalizing over 50 citizen facing services across two major service areas of Council tax and Housing benefits. The processes covered Housing benefits, Housing rent, Housing repairs, Council tax, Property tax and Business tax across functions of Requesting / Applying, Booking, Paying and Reporting.

The newly designed and developed platform ensured citizens could access the services through an online portal and a citizen-facing app. In addition to the strong customer support portal, several new components were developed including the complete workflow and approval engine, forecasting models and easy-to-view dashboards reporting relevant metrics for management insights. The new workflow engine provided the flexibility to have ensured a two-way engagement between the department and the citizen through multiple channels of engagement including social. Microland automated several process steps and rationalised a number of entities, data models and integrations thus eliminating redundancies.

The digital platform stack architected included a suite of Microsoft products including D365, Microsoft Social Engagement, SharePoint Online, ClickDimensions, Azure Services, Power BI and Organization Insights. Using MS Dynamics CRM with Microland's proprietary implementation frameworks, SureStep 365 with SAFe framework, Microland ensured that every channel was covered, including mobile and social support.

While re-engineering council's business processes and rearchitecting their application estate, Microland continued to further the partnership by modernizing the on-premise data centers as well. This involved migrating the data center to a co-location site and employing public cloud backup. After an initial assessment of the customer's estate and future goals, Microland compared leading industry solutions with multiple benchmarks and decided on a hybrid cloud strategy with Nutanix's hyperconverged infrastructure. As a Nutanix authorized Global System Integrator, Microland designed a solution utilizing 22 Nutanix NX-8035-G5 Nodes for the target state infrastructure which would support 200 Virtual machines and 90 TB of backup on Azure Cloud. Conceptual groups were created for each set of the migrated applications for a streamlined process. The benefits provided from the migration included: flexible timelines to accommodate business requirements, decommissioning legacy infrastructure and optimizing licensing requirements.

The digital transformation program has started yielding significant benefits to the Client. The customer centric business processes automation has led to several process improvements. Other improvements include -ease of access to borough's services via the customer-friendly portal and the citizen facing app, a significantly improved user experience for its employee, faster processing time of services, and the opening of a direct communication channel with the residents. The client has also benefited by the stability of the application infrastructure arising out of a fully managed hosting environment and a centralized infrastructure management tool stack.

The Client's transformation journey is just getting started—as Microland continues to automate and digitalize the rest of the business processes and services newer standards in citizen services are getting set. The second phase involves digitalizing rest of processes across 6 primary service areas comprising Housing & Regeneration, Environment, Social Care, Children's Services, Revenue and Benefits and Customer Services.

"We have ambitious plans for the Council's digital future and our relationship with Microland in the past few years ensures they not only understand our intricate IT ecosystem but also have proven capabilities to deliver agile and responsive environments." – Executive Director of Corporate Resources

About Microland

Microland's delivery of digital is all about making technology do more and intrude less. As we help enterprises move to nextGen technologies, we make sure this embrace of brilliance is predictable, reliable and stable. Incorporated in 1989 and headquartered in Bengaluru, India, Microland comprises more than 4,500+ digital specialists across offices and delivery centers in Asia, Australia, Europe, Middle East and North America.

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