

# How government CIOs can lead digital transformation

 By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

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The Gartner Symposium/ITxpo kicked off on Monday, 18 September 2017 at the CTICC and is expected to attract over 1000 attendees including 190 CIOs over four days. This is where the world's top CIOs gain a strategic view of the emerging trends shaping IT and business. The event aims to help CIOs approach critical challenges, make decisions with confidence, and achieve greater impact as leaders.



Neville Cannon

Neville Cannon, a research director focussing on the public sector and government in particular, addressed CIOs in his talk 'The digital government scenario: "Capital T" transformation in the public sector.'

Cannon pointed out some key issues when it comes to governments and the digital transformation journey.

There are two key issues, says Cannon:

- What does digital transformation look like in government?
- How can government CIOs lead and sustain transformation programmes?

## What does digital transformation look like in government?

When it comes to future technologies, we tend to look at the global benchmarks (e.g. UK, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands etc.). However, the problem is that the context doesn't always transfer. The kinds of things that are driving other countries don't necessarily translate to our country and context.

Cannon asked delegates whether they know what it is that their service can do better. He reiterated that *that* is of utmost importance.

Transformation by its very nature is complex and comes with high risks. But digital transformation shouldn't just be about doing the big things - but rather about doing the big things and doing them *well*.

He says digital transformation isn't an option, we can't choose *not* to do it, but we can choose *how* to do it. The move to the outcome we want is built through incremental projects.

He went on to give some inspiring examples from all over the world where governments are making headway and starting with small projects as they embark on the digital transformation journey.

## 1. UK - Agility is the new normal at the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency

**Opportunity:** The UK Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency had the opportunity to replace an inflexible, expensive outsourced mainframe contract. It wanted to replace green screen terminals in 22,700 garages issuing vehicle safety certificates.

**What was transformed and how:** The organisation used an agile development methodology and microservice architecture. They cut across to Amazon Web Services production version in just 10 weeks.

### Results:

- 50% savings were attributed to the award-winning project.
- Evaluating serverless computing to extend lessons learned.

## 2. Uganda - automation of airport operations

**Opportunity:** The Ugandan government saw the opportunity of a technological upgrade of the airport.

**What was transformed and how:** The transformation involved operational automation within the international airport as part of the government's plan to restructure the aviation sector and to boost tourism.

### Results:

- Improved and more efficient flight procedures
- Standardised operations and enhanced safety

## 3. Botswana - automation of postal services

**Opportunity:** The government of Botswana saw the opportunity to digitise postal services along with providing value-added services.

**What was transformed and how:** Botswana Post upgraded to digital postal services that were in line with the e-government initiative and aimed at improving operational efficiency coupled with ease of usage. It primarily included the deployment of cloud infrastructure and upgrades of core infrastructure software.

It launched a mobile application for accessing postal services along with e-services such as vehicle license renewal and

money transfer.

## **Results:**

- 121 outlets of Botswana Postal have been computerised and interconnected to the postal network.

Government and businesses need to start seeing how different technologies can be brought together to lead to significant change.

As in the case of Botswana Postal, the process doesn't start with delivering letters better, because eventually there might not be letters to deliver. It's, in essence, about realising the world is changing.

## **How can government CIOs lead and sustain transformation programmes?**

"Information and technology are at the heart of every digital government business strategy," says Cannon.

He recommends CIOs have a guiding policy (you need to be able to help your organisation through this process as a CIO), make strategic choices, and set guardrails (you need to understand the metrics that drive business success) to lead and sustain transformation programmes.

At the end of the day, digital transformation is a journey, not a destination. Make sure that the way you approach it is accommodating, business-led, and responsive.

"Only a sustained approach will ultimately take you forward", says Cannon.

## **ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG**

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work [here](#) and [here](#). Contact Ilse through her website [here](#).

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