

TechnologyOne

Currency of change for councils

Local government is at the forefront of digital transformation in Australia. Councils understand that to be able to deliver the growing services ratepayers demand and do so efficiently and cost-effectively requires adopting new technologies. It's that simple.

They also understand legacy systems can be old, inefficient and expensive.

Ironically though, some council financial managers are still finding it difficult to convince some elected members and the community at large that an investment in technology is key to long-term efficiencies.

That is despite the growing number of stories---including the Randwick, Yarra Ranges and Mount Alexander councils---of highly successful transformations that have changed the way those councils operates for the better.

There are many benefits associated with moving to a contemporary enterprise system, like TechnologyOne's OneCouncil, says the company's Local Government Industry Director, Peter Suchting.

Powerful financials

"The benefits of having a fully integrated solution like OneCouncil, with its powerful financial capabilities, include the ability to draw upon reliable, real-time data to develop accurate reports and forecasts and make well-informed, strategic management decisions", Mr Suchting says.

The importance of access to good data is something elected officials in local governments – the councillors charged with ensuring the authorities meet the needs of the community and spend its money wisely – well understand.

Brendon Roberts, for instance, is a councillor at Randwick City Council in Sydney and is also its former deputy mayor.

Roberts says he and his colleagues rely on council staff to keep them up to date.

"When a matter comes up in a monthly meeting that involves expenditure it is put on the agenda for approval. In the report the staff produce for us there is a financial impact section so we know the impact of the decision we are about to make.

"It is the primary source for councillors and we are basically beholden to that advice," he says.

Those council staff, in return, are beholden to the quality of data they can get from the system, says Suchting.

Single source of truth

Accuracy and speed is the key, Suchting says. Councils want to be able to draw on a single 'source of truth'.

Victoria's Yarra Ranges Shire Council recently replaced all of its legacy billing and revenue, asset management and payroll systems with a TechnologyOne's SaaS solution.

CEO Tammi Rose said the Council chose TechnologyOne because its solution aligned strongly with the local authority's strategic direction to change the way it thinks, works and delivers for the community.

"Our existing core business systems lacked the integration and sophistication required to better understand and serve our customers," Rose said.

"Adopting the OneCouncil solution integrated our billing, asset and payroll data with our existing TechnologyOne software, streamlining our operations and delivering a single source of truth. This simplified approach has allowed us to become more efficient and more agile."

Similarly, Victoria's regional Mount Alexander Shire Council has taken its digital transformation a step further, becoming the first to implement TechnologyOne's Property & Rating software on the Ci Anywhere platform.

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“We were thrilled to become the first in Australia to complete a rates run using Ci Anywhere,” said Bradley Thomas, Executive Manager Business Performance at Mount Alexander.

“The software enables us to deliver rates notices, invoices and other correspondence more efficiently, reducing overheads. And our employees love using Ci Anywhere – it has a consistent look and feel across and is easy to use,” Mr Thomas said.

A bespoke solution for the future

According to Suchting, the need for councils to become more efficient is being driven by rising costs associated with service delivery – such as wages and materials – and a decrease in funds as rates capping and reduced government backing. As such financial management is incredibly important, particularly over the long term when maintaining quality of assets and service within the constraints of a limited budget.

“Financial management is not all about profitability. It is about managing long term sustainability, and about managing risk,” he said.

“For example, it is not acceptable for a bridge to collapse because the council decided to defer spending on maintenance or capital expenditure. Residents also expect their ratepayer dollars to be spent wisely, so it’s vital councils have robust financial management processes to manage the assets, people and property information they’re responsible for.”

The OneCouncil effect

Although it has been repeatedly stressed in the digital transformation narrative, it is important to understand why a move to contemporary enterprise architecture is better in the long run.

Legacy systems generally lack integration and provide a very poor user experience making reporting and information visibility difficult. As a result, end users are not engaged and that translates to a higher, often menial, workload for back-office staff.

A contemporary system with a consumer grade interface better engages users who are happy to get the job done, Suchting said.

“Our OneCouncil solution is purpose built for local government, with specific functionality such as prediction modelling of optimised renewal and upgrade treatments for assets. This links directly to long-term financial plans,” Suchting said.

“Being a contemporary enterprise software provider, we facilitate more accurate and devolved data capture through an accessible, modern system that is available on any device anywhere anytime and is, therefore, more accessible to the end user and, in our case, also to customers.”

Greater knowledge through data analysis, efficiency, cost savings, better customer service, a happier workforce – the list of benefits from digital transformation is as endless.

To learn more search OneCouncil Effect.