VERACITY

HOW VERACITY HELPED MODERNIZE LEGACY SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES FOR A DIVISION OF THE USDA

SITUATION

As part of the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, the agency's Warehouse and Commodity Management Division (WCMD) administers a variety of crucial programs integral to the country's agriculture commodity trade, such as licensing storage facilities (grain elevators, peanut warehouses, etc.); handling direct payment and incentive programs for domestic cotton users; processing cotton, peanut and grain forfeitures; and more. The division includes around 85 employees with 40 working directly in the field.

After a merger of several divisions across the USDA, as well as a mandate from the USDA that all divisions modernize their systems and move to the cloud, the WCMD revealed many disparate technology systems, including Microsoft Access, basic spreadsheets, and an antiquated mainframe system. This led to redundancies and inefficiencies across several teams. The WCMD staff sought a solution that would help consolidate their tech stack, reduce the number of times employees entered the same data, and follow the USDA's mandate of moving systems to the cloud.

The new division established a goal to modernize their technology infrastructure so they could go from basic spreadsheets to a digital format that allows for collaboration across multiple teams in multiple locations. The new solution needed to not only bring consistency across divisions, but also allow the team to use and access the same data points.

CLIENT
USDA

SOLUTION
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

INDUSTRY
US FEDERAL

PLATFORM
SERVICENOW

SOLUTION A PHASED APPROACH

Another part of the division was already using ServiceNow and encouraged the team to explore the opportunity of how a platform as a service (PaaS) could solve these challenges. Originally, the group engaged Veracity Consulting – a ServiceNow Premier Partner – to find a replacement for one system, but soon asked Veracity for a solution that would help them with the larger issues identified above.

The Veracity team implemented a phased approach to modernizing the division's processes and systems. Issuing the contract in late 2017, Veracity embarked on Phase 1 of the work. Phase 2 expands the functionality of Phase 1, and Phase 3 focuses on improving access controls and improving the user experience.

In Phase 1, using the ServiceNow platform, the team established the relationships between the business and its warehouses, licenses, storage agreements and the examinations of those warehouses. The new platform also revealed additional opportunities for process improvements with the same solution. Unlike working with the previous mainframe (which would shut off at 6 p.m.), the new platform immediately allowed the team to quickly make changes and improvements, view analytics, and complete work at any time of day from anywhere with an Internet connection—especially important once the pandemic forced the teams to work from home.

"The benefits are absolutely intangible," said one team member. "If we didn't have our system that we have today, we would have really struggled with working from home. You can't put a dollar amount on that. We can't even describe how much better it is."

"I COULDN'T DO WHAT I DO TODAY IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE NEW SYSTEM."

servicenow
Partner

Premier

Veracity is a proud ServiceNow Premier Partner. To learn about how digital modernization can help your company, contact Veracity today!

RESULTS

The upgrade is expected to result in substantial cost savings, including more than $700,000 in labor, paper, postage and rent savings at the program level and approximately $3 million a year in hosting and operations fees of the previous mainframe applications.

While the potential cost savings are substantial, the team said the largest advantages are those intangible benefits, such as the drastically improved stakeholder experience, the immense time savings, reduced manual processes and added efficiencies. The team also recognized the increased security of the new system, which brings the division in line with the Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-19-21, which requires federal agencies transition to electronic records. Those kinds of benefits are even more crucial during a pandemic, said one team member: "I couldn't do what I do today if it weren't for the new system."

Work continues on Phase 1 and the ServiceNow implementation. Phase 2 expands the functionality including the lifecycle management of businesses, warehouses, licenses and storage agreements. It will also focus on the Cotton Programs component and functionality for the Commodity Management Branch.

Phase 3 will focus on improved access controls, suppressing legacy fields that were used for comparison throughout the project, and rearranging specific forms to enhance the user experience. Work will also include creating workflows between each of the business units and their processes, and establishing management-level dashboards to give the team a better understanding of improvement opportunities at the division level.