

The Three M's of Federal Communications:

Millennialize, Mobilize
and Modernize

verizon^v

A man in a blue shirt and jeans is standing on a staircase, looking at a tablet. He has a black bag slung over his shoulder. The background is a modern building with a glass facade.



Millennials matter more than ever.

Millennials are the first generation to be born into a completely digital world. Their idea of communication is more than talk; it's tweets, texts, posts and pictures. And while they might not give a second thought to losing their wallet, they would be lost without their smartphone.

Federal agency decision makers realize this, but many of them have overlooked one important fact:

Millennials are not kids anymore. They are adults in their 20s and early 30s who will soon represent a majority of the global workforce.

They engage with agencies to pay taxes, renew passports or acquire licenses, but expect very different interactions than their parents had.

For example:

- Millennials prefer online and mobile citizen services to face-to-face interactions

- They are much less likely to buy postage from a local post office

- They don't own a fax machine and are comfortable signing documents and using credit cards online

Communicating with Millennials.

Millennials communicate differently than previous generations. They are less likely to visit their Department of Motor Vehicles center to perform a vehicle registration renewal or driver's license renewal, but more likely to share their positive and secure on-line experience with friends and peers through social media.

Millennials also place a high value on personalized citizen service, although that service may often take the form of communications that don't require a person on the other end, such as account alerts or automated agents that use artificial intelligence (AI) technology.

This presents an interesting challenge for traditional public sector agencies:

How to communicate with a generation that defines communication differently?

Here are some things to consider:



Almost all of Millennials own a smartphone.



Millennials use more mobile apps than other groups and use them more often.

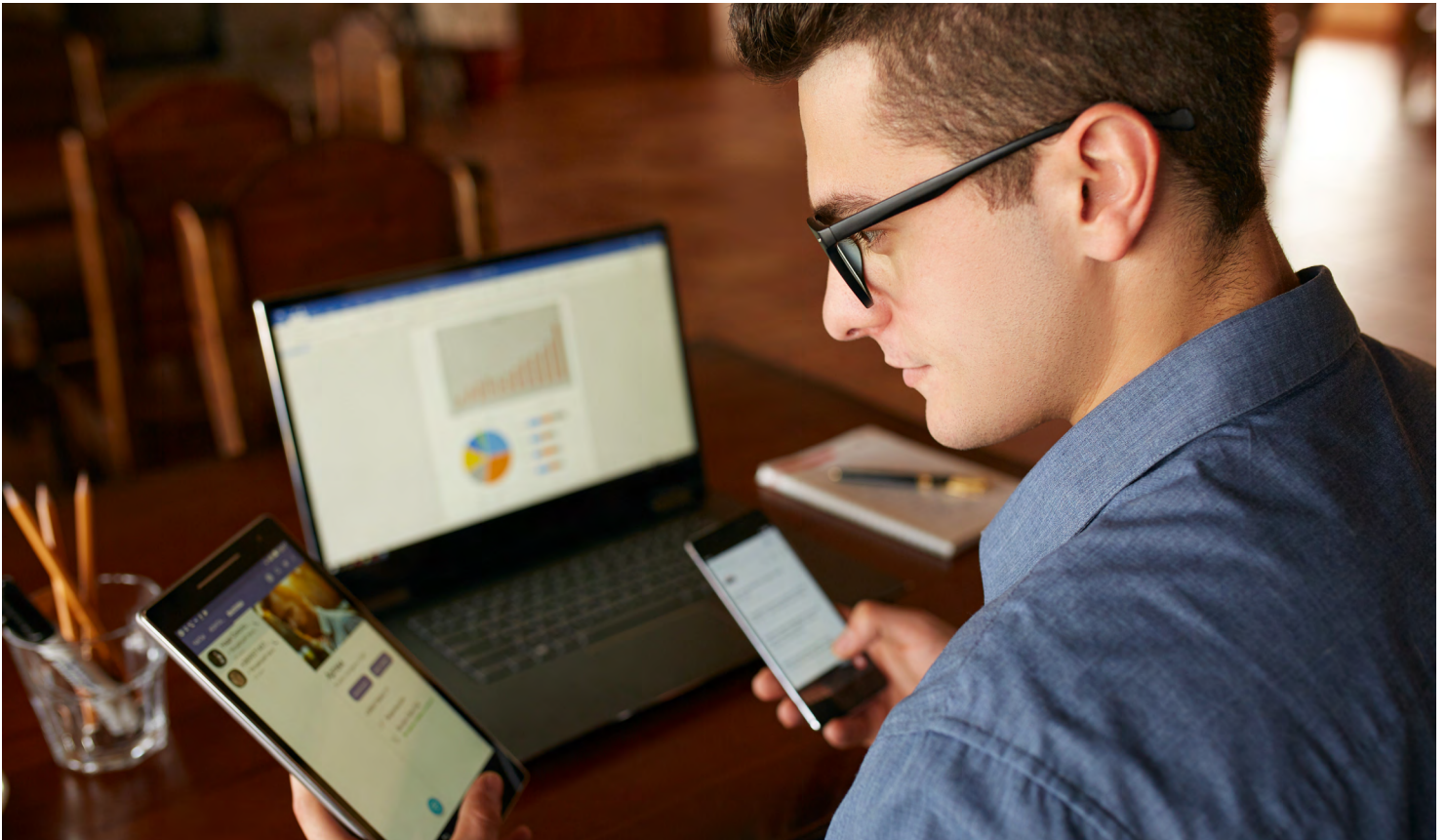


Millennials often open texts within 2 minutes of receiving them.



Millennials check Social Media accounts, like Twitter, at least once per day.





Modernize your communications.

Public sector agencies have traditionally relied upon the human connection to serve citizens fellow employees, or external agencies, whether in person or over the phone.

This high touch, low tech approach, however, opposes the low touch, high tech approach preferred by Millennials.

As a result, many public sector agencies should focus on the core tenets of mobility, flexibility, simplicity, and security in their communications system, because these are the qualities that Millennials expect in their communications.

What does this modern communications system look like?

- It presumes that communications will take place on a multiple devices, and can range from phone to desktop to mobile.
- It allows users to seamlessly shift between online, mobile, text, and other channels for communication and views those communications as part of a broader, single conversation.
- It helps agencies to accelerate internal processes such as passport renewals, account transfers, address changes, etc. through better internal collaboration.
- It leverages innovations such as unified communications and cloud technology to provide a consistent, reliable experience regardless media (e.g., voice, video, text), device, or location.

Getting started.

Many federal agencies lack flexibility and mobility support today have a complex communications system composed of various pieces and partners: PBXs, local and long-distance voice providers, call center software, collaboration tools, email, audio/video conferencing and so on. These systems, while reliable, are also cost-intensive and frequently lack flexibility and mobility support to meet the demands of Millennials.

Before businesses can move forward with a next-generation communications platform, they first need to know where they stand today in terms of their current gaps and capabilities.



Federal agencies can benefit by starting with these three steps toward modernization:

1 Audit your current communications capabilities

Survey which communications and collaboration features are being used in your agency and by whom. This includes voice calling features (e.g., multi-device ringing, call forwarding, etc.), call center capabilities, collaboration tools, audio/video conferencing, email, IM, online chat and so on.

2 Identify gaps and improvements

These are features that could enhance citizen service, increase productivity, streamline internal processes and better control costs.

3 Prepare for change

Understand how your future communications platform will impact your workforce, citizens, and partners as well as your wireless and wide area networks.



Choose the right solution.

Unifying communication applications such as voice, video, email and collaboration into a single solution and moving to the cloud can help manage capital and operational expenditures also enhancing productivity through richer, real-time collaboration.

Today, many vendors offer cloud-based communications solutions, ranging from simple Voice over IP (VoIP) solutions to more robust UC platforms. Many of these solutions offer mix-and match capabilities that allow agencies to customize their solution, including hybrid solutions that combine existing, premise-based technology with cloud-based components.

When considering a unified cloud communications solution, it's important to have the right questions in hand:

- What communications features are we using today, why (e.g., necessity? legacy?) and how much are they costing us?

- Which new features are available that could enhance our customer service and improve collaboration: video conferencing, desktop sharing, unified messaging, communications-enabled applications (e.g., adding click-to-call capabilities to our website)?

- Should we “rip and replace” what we have today or do we want to keep some of our legacy equipment in place and migrate select functions/features to the cloud?

- How will unified communications, video conferencing, and high-definition voice impact our network’s performance?



Make the right improvements.

While moving communications applications into the cloud offers cost efficiencies, federal agencies should view the cloud as a strategic move rather than simply a cost-saving measure. In the pursuit of new mission fulfillment, agencies must stay focused on how the cloud can create better customer experiences, maintain security and differentiate their services. After all, that's the real motivation behind modernizing communications in the first place.

As you evaluate cloud-based systems, keep these questions in mind:

- **Would real-time collaboration accelerate internal processes and eliminate inefficiencies that have crept into our current communications system?**

If so, look for a UC solution that has features such as presence-based communications (i.e., is a colleague offline, on the phone, mobile), expert-based routing and real-time connectivity between your workforce.

- **How are customer experiences handled and tracked across different channels?**

Can customers quickly escalate an online chat into a voice call?

- **How much time and money does our IT department spend on updating and maintaining communications systems?**

Would moving those systems into a managed cloud environment allow IT to focus on building innovative solutions for our mission critical efforts?



Train your team for success.

To get the full benefits of cloud-based unified communications, you first need to unify your agency around the capabilities and features of the new solution through training and ongoing technical support:

Make sure your audio/video conferencing application is easy to use

The most significant barrier to new feature adoption is complexity. It's not unusual in large federal agencies for a minority of power users to become the technology gatekeepers, but that will actually impede collaboration, so make sure everyone has the power to launch conferencing and collaboration apps from their devices.

Support Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy unless you're ready to support it

Unified communications should provide a consistent and simple interface for multiple applications on a single screen that behaves the same whether the user is accessing those apps from their smartphone, tablet, or PC.

Don't train everyone in the same way

A call center agent, for example, will use a different set of communications features than an information worker or traveling doctor. Tailor your training to the user specific role, driving greater productivity out of the gate – or, better still, choose a solution that has built-in training.

Make security best practices your practice

Educate employees to create stronger passwords, turn on encryption/authentication tools, use VPN settings, provision call features remotely, and take advantage of other security features in your new communications platform.

Select a partner you can trust.

Verizon is a trusted communications and technology partner majority of the public sector agencies. Our Virtual Communications Express for Government solution provides a secure, cloud-based platform for unified communications and collaboration. Virtual Communications Express can be easily customized to include a full suite of UC tools (for complementary tools to an existing solution such as Microsoft Skype for Business), contact center software, collaboration tools and more.

Beyond technology, Verizon also provides the expertise needed to maintain and support your UC platform including:

- Assessment and planning services to help you get started.

- Project management to help you avoid common installation pitfalls and get what you need from your investment.

- Expert technical support before, during and after deployment.

- Monitoring tools to help you maintain the performance and quality you (and your customers) expect.



Learn more.

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