

CASE STUDY

Revamping Outdated Systems: Cognitive's Game-Changing Makeover:

How Cognitive's Collaborative Teams Overhauled the VA's Portfolio of Legacy Systems for Enhanced Efficiency and Service Delivery



PROJECT DETAIL:

CAPABILITIES:

DevSecOps

AGENCY:

Department of Veterans Affairs

INTRODUCTION

For the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), successful care delivery depends upon the reliable performance of back-end application systems. Yet over decades of upgrades and software additions, the VA's systems had swollen to include more than 155 disparate products just within the four product lines that make up VA's Corporate Portfolio.

Effective operation of those product lines—spanning Acquisition and Property Management, Financial Management, Human Capital Management, and Congressional and Legal Affairs—depends upon the secure, reliable, and efficient delivery of data across VA services and locations. To keep data moving seamlessly across disparate legacy systems in dire need of updates, the VA contracted Cognitive to manage and enhance products within its Corporate Portfolio.

CHALLENGE

The scale of the VA's Consolidated Corporate Support Services (CCSS) contract demanded a diverse range of expertise capable of addressing products' unique challenges at every stage of development, across multiple projects running concurrently. For each product, Cognitive's experts would have to explore the starting as-is environment to identify changes needed, while accounting for barriers and risks associated with those changes. What's more, any updates and enhancements would need to be made in an active production environment. Service providers would have to be careful not to disrupt the security or performance of systems actively serving users.

To manage such diverse system needs, Cognitive knew it couldn't bring a one-size-fits-all approach to this task order. Fortunately, Cognitive was uniquely positioned to deliver with the flexibility needed to improve operations on the VA's terms.

SOLUTION

Communication would prove essential to this project's success. First, Cognitive appointed an experienced Portfolio Manager (PfM) to serve as the VA's single point of contact for the entire CCSS contract. Beneath the PfM, Program Managers (PgM) were assigned to coordinate with VA Product Line Managers on specific product needs and goals. As project needs were identified, Cognitive deployed a team of experts armed with the appropriate skills required.

This Agile shared service model allowed Cognitive to scale to meet specific project needs as they arose, while maximizing the team's ability to support multiple products simultaneously. It also reduced costs to the client while introducing consistency across the software that serves as the backbone of the VA's corporate operations.

Behind the scenes, Cognitive's development, security, and operations teams communicated frequently to discuss progress on backlogs and updates. This close collaboration ensured all team members shared responsibility for product security throughout the software development lifecycle. VA stakeholders also maintained a front-row seat throughout the contract. In addition to regular stakeholder meetings, all partners had access to a centralized SharePoint site and enterprise-level performance dashboard. Through these resources, the PfM and PgMs maintained project schedules and documented emerging issues and progress toward key performance indicators. This communication and transparency ensured that updates met the VA's objectives.

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RESULTS

Through their contract to design, build, and maintain the VA's corporate systems, Cognitive's cross-functional teams have increased the availability of VA services and enabled the more efficient delivery of services to Veterans. Solutions prioritizing user-centric designs and strategically implemented automation have optimized users' workflows, streamlined legacy processes, minimized the risk of human error, and eliminated redundant processes. These changes have increased operational efficiency and freed VA resources to focus on higher-value activities.

Moreover, the deployment of monitoring tools allows Cognitive to easily analyze data trends and pinpoint new areas for future improvements. Code optimization and system-level enhancements have ensured the system's scalability and long-term sustainability as new updates are introduced. These forward-looking changes have created a foundation that maximizes the value of existing solutions for both the VA and the Veterans they serve.



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