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Final Copy of Case Study

LOCATION:
Ewing, NJ, US

ORGANIZATION:
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

YEAR:
2011

ORGANIZATION URL:
http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/home.shtml

STATUS:
Laureate

PROJECT NAME:
Providing a secure platform for citizen/government interaction

CATEGORY:
Digital Access

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) is tasked with building a stronger and more competitive Canada and improving the quality of life of the country's citizens. As part of this remit, HRSDC maintains a range of citizen records, including birth and death certificates as well as employment and pension details. Increasingly, citizens and businesses want to be able to register, update and view such records online. By using the Internet, HRSDC can not only provide faster and more reliable access to data, but also significantly reduce operating costs by eliminating the need for human interactions and the costs of printing and mailing of important documents. HRSDC applications, including Employment Insurance, Canada Pension Plan, and Old Age Security systems can be accessed via a dedicated portal, My Service Canada Account (http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/online/mysca.shtml). For the portal to be an effective alternative to telephone and face-to-face interactions, it must be secure, highly available, reliable and easy to use. As HRSDC and other government departments deal with lots of sensitive information, such as citizens' personal and financial details, the security of the portal is of paramount importance to protect Canadian citizen's privacy and personal information. In early 2008, HRSDC's IT branch was tasked with implementing a number of major applications that would enable the delivery of employment insurance services to citizens via the My Service Canada Account (MSCA) and to integrate MSCA with the solution provided through the government-wide Secure Channel project. This was a large undertaking that was successfully completed in a very short period of time. In 2010, the government-wide CyberAuthentication program was initiated to provide a standards-based approach to credential authentication and management. This initiative required that HRSDC and other departments transition from the Secure Channel ePass product to a SAML-based solution for credential authentication. This project was high profile, very complex, with extremely tight timeframes and one for which there would far-reaching implications were timelines not met successfully. To simplify this and allow for future growth, HRSDC decided to establish a centralized framework and solution for

managing user credential authentication and performance across its growing online application portfolio. Based on CA Federation Manager, CA Application Performance Management and Oracle technologies, the platform enables HRSDC to safeguard both the security and availability of its applications. By leveraging federated credentials, HRSDC will be able to provide authorized users with secure access to multiple government services via single sign-on, which will help improve the online experience and reduce IT administration. The online experience has been further enhanced through the use of proactive performance management tools that monitor user transaction and application response times. For example, using CA Application Performance Management HRSDC can detect if a service threshold, such as the time taken to download an employment insurance record, has been breached and automatically alert its IT team. This enables them to get a head start on solving the problem before users are impacted.

SOCIETAL BENEFITS

This greatest societal benefit of this project is that it makes it easier for citizens to interact with their government in a timely, modern and secure way and at a cost that is respectful of taxpayer dollars. The project has enabled annual cost savings of $10 million.

PROJECT BENEFIT EXAMPLE

Thanks to its centralized approach for managing online applications, HRSDC is able to provide citizens with access to secure and highly available web-based services. This has led to increased utilization of the My Service Canada Account portal, which processes a total of 15 million transactions per year. The ability to access insurance, pension and employment records and services via a secure online portal makes life simpler for citizens and businesses, while ensuring that the government has accurate and up-to-date information. Cheryl Fisher, Senior Director General for Citizen Services, comments, "Balancing accessibility with security is key to the delivering user-friendly services online. The new platform streamlines the registration process and works more effectively with screen readers, making it faster and easier for all citizens, including those with disabilities, to use our online services." As well as benefiting directly from the applications available via the new platform, citizens also benefit from the $10 million cost savings achieved by the HRSDC, which means their tax dollars can be put to better use. "By providing 24-hour access to information online, we have been able to reduce call volumes and onsite visits, which frees up our staff," adds Fisher. "In the future, we plan to add additional features to the platform, such as the ability to display notices and send messages, which will further reduce our reliance on paper and snail mail." The standardized platform will continue to deliver savings as new applications can be developed and rolled out without the need for unique authentication processes. This will not only speed up the development cycle and shorten the launch time for new citizen services, but also reduce resource and budget requirements.