

Civil Servants taking it upon themselves to combat digital skills gap

Despite enthusiasm for digital transformation, Whitehall workers are growing more frustrated by lack of support, Sopra Steria survey reveals

London, 12 June 2017: Sopra Steria is today publishing its [Government Digital Trends Survey](#), a report analysing three years' worth of feedback from civil servants engaged in delivering the digital transformation agenda. The survey, which captured nearly 4,500 responses, shows unmistakable enthusiasm for the benefits of government digitisation. However, concerns about a persistent and growing skills gap is forcing civil servants to take matters into their own hands.

The impact of digital transformation across central government in the three years since the first survey was conducted has been striking. Nearly all (88%) civil servants surveyed now agree that digital is changing the way they work. Despite the challenges and disruption inherent in change at this scale, a growing majority (64%) feel their job has benefitted from the move to digital. However, this increasingly engaged and informed workforce, is becoming more aware of the scale of the challenges ahead, and raising concerns about the need for better training and leadership.

Although a record number of workers in 2017 said their digital skills training has increased (35%, up from 18% in 2016), nearly half (43%) still do not feel their training has been sufficient. This sentiment has grown steadily since the survey began, and has led to civil servants taking training into their own hands.

Over a third (36%) of respondents say that they have taken to self-directed study in their own time to ensure they have the digital skills for their role, a number which has grown every year (24% in 2015). The largest number (44%) say that 'informal best-practice' sharing is a primary means of building digital skills. Most worryingly, only 8% say they receive digital skills training as part of their formal induction, and 29% say they have not been given any training in the digital skills needed for their role.

The report provides a comprehensive analysis of sentiment trends towards a range of digital topics and strategies in government, among these:

- **Crucial skills gaps:** Development (44%) and Service design (44%) were identified as the largest skills and capabilities gaps in government
- **Growing disconnect with users:** Despite the Government Digital Service's (GDS's) stated principle of putting user needs at the heart of its efforts, fewer civil servants (33%, down from 43% in 2016) are defining 'digital' in these terms. Less than two thirds of civil servants feel their organisation has a good understanding of user needs (61%)
- **Data and analytics overlooked:** Only 45% are using data and analytics to understand user needs and experiences, in favour of 'analogue' methods like focus groups and direct feedback
- **Strained resources present barriers:** Civil servants consistently list a lack of resources as among the top barriers to change (20% consider it the most significant issue)

- **Siloing holds back efficiency:** A growing number (21%) report progress on developing shared back end services, however the critical mass needed to achieve significant savings is still far off

Philip Craig, Government Sector Strategy Director at Sopra Steria commented, *“Over the three years where we have conducted our Government Digital Trends Survey, the civil servants working to deliver the UK Government’s digital transformation have experienced tremendous change. It’s encouraging to see that despite both internal and external pressures, enthusiasm for digital transformation in government services is so resilient.*

“This ‘report card’ is promising, but also reveals how much there remains to be done. We know that UK citizens want better, more integrated and intuitive digital services from their governments. Putting the needs and expectations of these users first must remain fundamental to the plan for delivery, which means taking all necessary steps to develop needed skills and bring in the right expertise from elsewhere in the market.

“Effective strategies for transforming government revolve around strong political and managerial leadership and robust governance. Our survey is being released just as a new government is being formed, one whose first tasks will be ensuring it has an effective strategy to address major reforms presented by an EU exit. This Government will, of course, be looking for the best return on its investment, an earnest focus on developing and sourcing digital skills and capabilities is a sure bet.”

About Sopra Steria

Sopra Steria, a European leader in digital transformation, provides one of the most comprehensive portfolios of end-to-end service offerings on the market: consulting, systems integration, software development, infrastructure management and business process services. Sopra Steria is trusted by leading private and public-sector organisations to deliver successful transformation programmes that address their most complex and critical business challenges. Combining high quality and performance services, added value and innovation, Sopra Steria enables its clients to make the best use of digital technology. With 40,000 employees in more than 20 countries, Sopra Steria had revenue of €3.7 billion in 2016.

For more information, visit us at www.soprasteria.co.uk

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