DEPARTMENT OF STATE · UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Keeping Diplomacy Connected

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Keeping Diplomacy Connected

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The world of diplomacy looks a lot different today from even two short years ago, prior to the outbreak of COVID-19. Technology, rather than signaling the end of diplomacy as was once feared in the 19th century, instead enabled critical diplomatic activities to continue and transform. We spoke to Todd Cheng, Director of IT Customer Service at the U.S. Department of State, about the ever-evolving relationship between technology and diplomacy.

I t was once feared that technology would render diplomats obsolete.

In the 1860s, upon receiving the first telegraph message, British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston famously declared: "My God, this is the end of diplomacy!"

Given diplomats' emphasis on interpersonal communication, some may indeed shun technology. Yet as communications technology improved through the decades, diplomacy in turn evolved tremendously. Most recently, IT played an essential role keeping diplomacy going throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Prior to the pandemic, State often felt around a decade behind private sector enterprise," admits Todd Cheng, Director of IT Customer Service at the U.S. Department of State. "When I joined in the early 2000s some of the technology was going on 30 years old, and we were only just enabling internet for desktop computers.

"However, with each additional technology-savvy Secretary of State, the gap between public and private narrowed markedly, and the velocity of change

increased. There's no longer this concept of sitting on even a 10-year-old technology that is not meeting the mission. That's because the modern diplomat needs parity with the tools in the private sector. Diplomats have never had to open a ticket to use their personal applications and don't want to for their work applications either."

A FACILITATOR OF DIPLOMACY

Technology continues to play a critical role as a facilitator of US diplomacy, just as it did when the telegraph was introduced to diplomatic processes in 1867. This trend is evident with smartphones, email, laptops, cloud, data and many other devices and pieces of software in between.

Today, Cheng is responsible for supporting the government and industry teams that manage the IT service desk of the U.S. Department of State, the government agency responsible for foreign policy. His team's mission is to enable the objectives of the Department's various bureaus to be accomplished as seamlessly and effectively as possible by using numerous technologies that assist diplomats in their day-to-day work.

This involves supporting a hard-working team that is responding on a 24/7, 365-day-a-year basis to customers who encounter IT problems, such as when system updates do not go as expected or cyber issues emerge.

In total, Cheng's portfolio covers around

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Technology to advance diplomacy at home and abroad.

Improving the customer experience ensures diplomats have the tools and capabilities needed to perform their mission, wherever diplomacy is needed.

With extensive experience supporting the Department of State and diplomats in the field, GDIT's cloud, cyber, artificial intelligence, and data analytics expertise solve for the problems of today while foreseeing the needs of tomorrow.

Overview 2021 in numbers

CCS offers Tier 1; 2 Service Desk Support, Endpoint Support (Desktop/Laptop/Zero Client/Printer), VIP Services, Walk Up Services, Unclassified/Classified Desktop Support, Asset Management (40k Assets),Continuous Improvement (CI), Risk Mitigation, S/W Deployment, H/W Refreshment, Security, Incident, Service, Interaction, and Problem Management.

By the numbers

98k+
global customers supported in 2021.

46 FTEs
and ~326 contractors supported the office across 3 divisions (DSS, OSS, ITSC).

Supported
25k/100k+ Desktop customers
14k/30k ClassNet customers
111/400 Sites
49/53 Bureaus

Enhanced Security

- Mitigated 120K security vulnerability risks
- Disabled / deleted 16k unused accounts
- Maintained up-to-date patches for 99.9% of desktops and laptops

Modernized Technology

- Deployed 1,300 laptops and 7,565 desktops to bureau customers
- Upgraded 15,600 Windows 10 workstations to remain compliant with security requirements

Customer Service

59,570 requests handled by CCS in 2021:

- 2,889 requests VIP
- 4,782 critical / high priority requests
- Average FCR of 33%
- Average MTTR (hours) of 49 hours

193,565 incidents handled by CCS in 2021:

- 15,381 critical / high priority incidents
- Average FCR of 26%
- Average MTTR (hours) of 47 hours

Top Incident Contact Types

Contact Type	# Tickets
Email	89,866
Phone	68,375
Self-Service	21,294
IT Mart Walk-in	10,761
Chat / Alert	685

2021 Customer Satisfaction Survey

Overall Satisfaction

Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Very Disatisfied | Neutral | Disatisfied
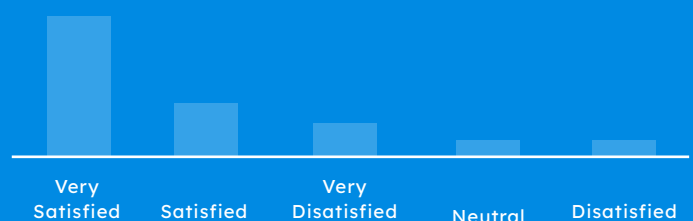
Service innovations

Enabled and improved ServiceNow capabilities, including:
- Knowledge management
- Major incident
- Virtual Agent – chatbot
- Agent chat
- Walkup Experience

Out of 13,853 responses received:

4.48/5.00 Overall Satifsaction Rating for CCS Requests

4.43/5.00 Overall Satifsaction Rating for CCS Incidents

75,000 unique customers and upwards 450,000 internal customer contacts every year. Most (around 80%) work across 111 domestic U.S. facilities and now more than 40,000 private homes following the switch to hybrid work triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This mandate stands in stark contrast to when Cheng first joined the Department of State 17 years ago. Back then, Cheng's first posting was to the U.S. Embassy in Eritrea where he handled the IT demands of about 100 people across several facilities in the horn of Africa.

"I had never travelled overseas before this," recalls Cheng, who had to wait patiently for two years after submitting his initial job application before getting hired and selected for overseas work.

"The people in Eritrea were wonderful and the technology and infrastructure was challenging, in contrast to what was trending back home. To get a cell phone you had to issue a Diplomatic Note with the local government, and they were limited to only a few at the embassy. There were electrical blackouts 12 hours a day that were commonplace back then and our primary connection to the world was over a large satellite dish – I was certainly chucked in at the deep end."

Cheng's first experience in Eritrea revealed the contrast between public and private sector approaches to embracing technology and what technology was available at the edge of diplomacy, in the developing world. It also sparked a passion in the mission of bringing better tools into diplomacy. Since then, the U.S. Department of State's IT operations function largely via a network of public-private partnerships, embedded in nearly every mission of diplomacy. The management of these relationships is a fundamental part of Cheng's role since he

"The velocity of change is increasing. There's no longer this concept of sitting on even a 10-year-old piece of technology that is marginally meeting the mission needs because you simply don't have a choice anymore"

- TODD CHENG, DIRECTOR OF IT CUSTOMER SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Enabling Self Service

Employees expect self-service
"myServices," powered by the
self- service capabilities for ov
at 275 embassies and consula
billion in services annually. This
and supports administrative fu
platform for increased user ac

Empowering Citizen Development

To develop an innovative suite of
customized tools and applications
to meet the specific needs of posts
and bureaus, business owners need
low-code and no-code solutions
for building and fielding needed
applications. Being the enterprise
standard for low-code development.
ServiceNow is used by over 12 bureaus
to deploy mission-critical applications.

5 Ways Servic Helps the St Departme Drive Effec Operations Collaborat

Easing Cybersecurity Management

To secure the global enterprise of the State
Department, a data-informed security manage
approach is critical to assess current security ris
align with acceptable risk thresholds. This secur
be centrally managed for improved security pos
and increased efficiency and accessibility. Servi
provides enterprise capabilities for managemer
visibility of legacy security software.

IT and automation.
ServiceNow platform provides
ver 95,000 interagency users
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unctions while providing a
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Realizing Legacy Modernization

More than three-quarters of the Department's IT resources are dedicated to supporting the operations and maintenance of existing systems, many of which depend on outdated legacy technologies. New, innovative technologies should include plans to decommission legacy environment, cut costs, and make the organization more efficient in the delivery of IT services. ServiceNow enables the transition of these legacy assets into modern workflows and processes.

Achieving Agile IT Governance

To meet the speed of the mission, IT management must make a shift to agile methodologies to deliver solutions and applications to the field. ServiceNow provides enterprise oversight of IT projects, portfolios, and investments to provide a holistic view of IT resources and priorities.

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For More Information, visit www.servicenow.com/gov

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IT at the U.S. Department of State

The Bureau of Information Resource Management (IRM) is the lead bureau for IT at the U.S. Department of State and has a clear mandate as follows:

• IRM's Mission: "To create an interconnected, secure, and informed Department through the prioritised, secure, and innovative application of IT resources."

• IRM's Vision: "To drive necessary and effective operations and collaboration across the Department, its partners, and foreign audiences."

The IT Customer Care & Support (CCS) Office plays an integral role, which Cheng oversees.

• CCS' Mission: "To lead IT support services and advance U.S. diplomatic efforts by supporting our customers through innovative problem solving, empathy, and resilience."

took on his position three years ago.

UPDATING THE IT MODEL

The IT Customer Care & Support office and Cheng's position were created by Secretary Rice to centralize IT support. CCS adopted a trending best practice for IT management, the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) framework, with the Department of State since 2006. Secretary Powell advocated for smart phones and internet access, Secretary Rice called for more centralized IT support, and Secretary Clinton advocated for migration to the Cloud. The new leadership's mission is to combine all these past successes to enable the Future of Work for more mobile and flexible diplomacy.

"I've been through the process of updating the IT model at State and its contracts twice in three years as we've had to change the core contract and update to a new, more customer centric version of ITIL," Cheng says. "As you can imagine, that involves a fair amount of potential for disruption when you are managing between 1,500 and 2,000 customer contacts a day," Cheng continues. By his calculations, such changes benefited the organization by reducing customer disruption to save 400,000 'diplomacy hours' every month that are better spent solving global problems.

Cheng and his team also partnered with General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT), a company that had, in the space of eight months, become central to the evolution and maturation of IT service delivery at the Department of State. Currently GDIT is helping to blend the necessary frameworks in ITIL, ISO, Human Centred Design, Project Management and Customer Relationship Management, with an end goal of supporting the many diverse

missions of diplomacy.

"It was refreshing to see a new approach that delivers week over week performance improvements," Cheng adds. "Whenever we detect a challenge, they come in with an after-action report and explain the root cause analysis of the issue, as well as what they are going to do in the form of a corrective action plan.

"Within just four months we were able to clearly see how much time and cost the partnership with GDIT was saving for us and for our customers. The key was increasing the quality of first contact resolution. That reduced the time needed to get our customers back to their work."

RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC
When Cheng took on the role of Director of IT Customer Service for the Department

Todd Cheng
Director of IT Customer Service
US Dept Of State

Todd Cheng has managed or implemented technology for over 25 years. During his time at the U.S. Department of State, Cheng was posted to Eritrea, Italy, Libya and Vietnam before assuming the role of Director of the IT Customer Service office. His next assignment will be Japan.

Cheng's team provides support to more than 75,000 unique employees located in 400 locations. His office is the intersection between IT services and the Department's broad mission which accounts for 450,000 customer contacts a year.

Cheng earned a Bachelor of Computer Science from Oregon State University and a Master of Science in Government Information Leadership from the National Defense University in Washington D.C.

"I continue to enjoy the changes and adventures of technology delivery and support. I persist in adopting newer technologies or methodology when they assist in meeting our goals and provide an advantage. I am passionate about connecting diplomacy and working with extraordinary humans who are growth minded. I am comfortable learning new and anew."

of State towards the end of 2019, he had no idea that a global pandemic would turn much of the Department's working model on its head.

Indeed, much of the progress driven by collaborations with the likes of GDIT may not have even emerged if it were not for the rapid acceleration that swept through the organization over the past two years.

For Cheng, while the pandemic caused enormous health and socioeconomic hardship, the silver lining was the opportunity to make a dramatic impact on how IT service delivery is executed. The team he supports, across both government and industry, transformed the customer experience for the better.

From greatly increasing the proportion of work completed on remote devices to moving away from on-premise infrastructure

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The power of partnerships

Along with GDIT, Cheng and his team collaborate closely with a number of other private sector partners. These range from big names like Dell, DMI, SAIC, Microsoft, Google, Cisco to many small businesses as well.

This ecosystem of relationships is greatly helping to reduce the technology gap between public and private institutions. Partnerships in technology – as in diplomacy more broadly – are key to productivity and efficiency gains for the Department of State.

Cheng says: "One hard part about IT service desk work is everybody thinks they can do your job. However, managing complex adaptive systems is more challenging than most expect. My office has had a productive history of partnership with DMI for this work. This partnership grew with the Department as we went from a contact centre routing calls to starting the journey of aggressively seeking to improve our first contact resolutions and establish a centre of excellence."

work, to becoming a software-as-a-service model hosted in the Cloud – a lot happened in a short space of time that would have been inconceivable in 2019.

"It all started at a meeting in February 2020 when we were asked what we needed to manage a mass telework event," Cheng says. "We knew of developments in China and that change was coming, and we saw it as a huge opportunity to innovate – we had to grab that chance and run through bureaucracy with scissors, cutting red tape."

Longstanding partners such as AT&T played a key role in safely enabling employees out of offices and into their home workstations. The transition was ready within just 30 days. Such was the shift in dynamics at State, digital work conducted by the Department on remote devices such as laptops and smartphones increased

from 1% to over 50% in the space of just two years. The diplomatic agency's focus is now squarely on the future of work with mobile diplomacy.

"The pandemic enabled us to replace a lot of old tech, but more importantly we have been able to drive a cultural change which traditionally is very difficult to do in government circles," Cheng says. "Almost overnight, the approach to risk management had to shift to enable us to follow pandemic protocols." The risk of not being able to do the mission of diplomacy drove change and cut through the traditional excuse of 'that's not how we have done it before'."

There was, inevitably, some resistance encountered along the way. Cybersecurity was one major concern that had to be overcome and required many system and procedural upgrades. In response, and to

> # "The tradecraft of the guild in addition to keeping diplomacy connected is to provide the smooth transition to new technology that better enables security and the many unique mission"

– TODD CHENG, DIRECTOR OF IT CUSTOMER SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

counter the increased threat landscape caused by adopting hybrid working models, State is "leaning in" with industry to adopt a "zero-trust" approach for the network.

LOOKING AHEAD
There are many new IT approaches underway at Department of State and new tools for the long-term. These include remote work agreements, use of laptops and collaboration via several virtual conferencing solutions such as Microsoft Teams, Google, Webex and Zoom.

Ultimately, these pandemic-driven transformations will help Cheng and his customer service team to better serve the Department in the years ahead. Cheng considers it his core goal to centralize key service desk functions that will enable the delivery of a more consistent service. Over time, Cheng hopes this will position the Department of State as a center of excellence from which other government agencies can draw inspiration.

Fortunately, there was already a solid base of customer service success when Cheng started. So now around 50% of customer demand is solved within the first contact, up from 15%. Cheng's team aims to push this percentage ever higher in 2022.

"Our job is to get customers back to supporting their own mission as quickly as possible," Cheng says, adding a note of optimism to the conversation. "It will not be an easy task – but the team and industry partners are eager to support diplomacy and have proven they can overcome the challenges.

"We are adding new technology on a weekly basis and that with meeting some extraordinary humans, is what continues to excite and motivate me after 17 years with the Department of State. I hope that opportunities collaborating across diplomacy, people, cultures, and technology kindle others to join a tradecraft with a long history of adopting technology and close partnerships with industry." ∎