



CASE STUDY

AGENCY DRIVES TRANSFORMATION BY ENSURING THOUSANDS OF STAKEHOLDERS ARE AGENTS FOR CHANGE

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is the government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States of America. USCIS, operating in 200+ domestic and international field offices, establishes immigration services, policies and priorities to preserve America's legacy as a nation of immigrants, while ensuring that no one is admitted who might be a threat to public safety. The agency's staff of more than 10,000 people adjudicates more than one million immigration cases per year.

THE CHALLENGE

USCIS is embarking on an enterprise-wide initiative that will transform the agency from a decentralized paper-based business model to a more centralized and consolidated electronic environment for case management. The impact of this effort will be far-reaching: 10,000+ USCIS employees, numerous support agencies, a number of immigration lines of business, thousands of essential contractors, and millions of immigrants. Adding urgency to the effort is a political environment in which immigration continues to be a significant national security issue – requiring cases to be adjudicated faster and with more diligence than perhaps ever before. And, to compound this major change effort, the transformation must address a vast array of cultural and regulatory issues.

The main business of USCIS is adjudication – making decisions about whether applicants should receive the immigration benefits for which they apply. Currently, USCIS adjudicators spend about 20% of their time using their experience and knowledge to make decisions,

THE CLIENT

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is the government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States of America.

THE CHALLENGE

USCIS was to transition from a highly decentralized, paper-based business to a centralized and consolidated electronic environment, while adjudicating more than one million cases faster and with more diligence than ever before.

THE SOLUTION

- A four stage roadmap for over 800 individual stakeholders and 300 stakeholder groups that communicated their current levels of engagement.
- A comprehensive matrix of plans and protocols to identify stakeholders who should advance to a higher level of engagement and create a plan to get there

THE VALUE

North Highland consulting provided the tools, methodology and protocols that enabled USCIS to engage the right stakeholders, ensuring the continued adoption and success of their new systems and policies.

UNIMAGINABLY ACHIEVABLE

When you engage North Highland consulting, you can rest assured that we will deliver an innovative solution to the project. We are driven in our pursuit of unique, creative answers, tailor-made to your specific needs. However, we are also diligent in making sure that any implementation is based in reality. What we propose must always be achievable and work in concert within your enterprise as a whole.

“The North Highland team’s straightforward approach saved us several months of effort and thousands in additional consulting fees.”

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which is the most value-added part of their job. The rest of their time is spent obtaining information from multiple resources and using a paper-based system in their daily process. In turn, they are evaluated based on the number of files processed in a day. Because of this standard, the biggest impact of the transformation is a cultural one. Adjudicators will need to learn to trust an electronic environment, alter the way they do business, and be prepared to be evaluated for the quality of their work and decisions made rather than the number of files processed.

THE SOLUTION

Due to the decentralized nature of the organization, USCIS engaged North Highland consulting to begin a change management initiative to encourage adoption of this transformation across all critical levels of leadership and all employees. The success of the initiative would require building strong relationships among multiple stakeholders within USCIS leadership, DHS, Congress, and the Immigration and Border Management Line of Business. The team was asked to build a structure and discipline for managing stakeholder relationships, including:

- A four-stage roadmap to include an initial snapshot of over 800 individual stakeholders and 300 stakeholder groups and their specific level of engagement
- A comprehensive matrix of plans and protocols to identify stakeholders who should advance to a higher level of engagement and the plan to get them there
- Comprehensive engagement plans that include outreach protocols for each stakeholder group and engagement level. Protocols included change management materials such as: meeting outlines, general instructions, objectives, outcomes, a high-level agenda, and key messages by audience level (executive, management, and staff) and location (internal or external).

The team worked to put in place a stakeholder relationship management approach that focused on building knowledge and desire to participate, and identifying those stakeholders who could quickly become change agents. The 800 individual stakeholders and 300 stakeholder groups, their profiles, and communication protocols were identified in less than four months. This enabled USCIS to begin executing the communication plans and identifying, as well as empowering, change agents as soon as possible.

THE VALUE

The true measure of success for USCIS is mission-focused, specifically a focus on customers and superior customer service. Because of this mission, the success of this project affected not only citizens and would-be citizens, but also 10,000 CIS employees, 12,000 CIS contractors, and thousands of agency employees. North Highland consulting was able to help USCIS organize all stakeholders into specific groups and then define, in a simple and elegant way, how to best communicate with these individuals. The roadmap, engagement plans and protocols developed for USCIS delivered a straight forward and logical process with clear inputs, outputs and outcomes.