



Mastering digital transformation Working toward Administration 4.0 using digital expertise and a digital concept

In this interview, Frank Schöneberg, Head of Public Sector Sales Germany at CHG-MERIDIAN, expands on his many years of experience working with public-sector clients and explains how the public sector can tackle and master the shift to Administration 4.0.



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Developing e-government and taking steps toward digitalization continue to be central issues in the public sector. In a recent survey conducted this year, the German Association of Towns and Municipalities found that around 90 percent of municipalities recognize the opportunities offered by digitalization. At the same time, 90 percent of respondents do not yet have a strategy in place for the necessary restructuring process. How do you help your customers begin their digitalization journey?

Schöneberg: Our holistic approach sheds light on our customers' current individual situation from a technical, administrative, and procedural perspective. We analyze the entire IT infrastructure, the processes, and the workflows, as well as the technology lifecycle. This allows us to optimize the IT infrastructure and reduce obsolete technologies while streamlining processes and increasing resource efficiency. The result is faster automated workflows, higher productivity, and lower costs, as well as greater scope for investment. We also deploy efficient technologies and IT solutions that match the existing infrastructure, thus enabling our public-sector customers to accelerate their modernization and digital transformation programs.

Individual and flexible usage models and transparent management option are important aspects of our solutions. We address the individual requirements for new workstation systems, printers, laptops, smartphones, and tablets, while ensuring transparency of all costs and consumption-based data. We also take care of the processing of old assets, from local collection to certified and GDPR-compliant data erasure at our Technology Center.

Anyone who tackles digital transformation with a strategy like this will not only regard digitalization as an opportunity, but will also be able to take advantage of it. What's more, this approach can overcome the disparities between urban and rural areas. The opportunity to modernize can be a real boost to the future viability of rural areas, in particular. Digital solutions can help to make cities and rural regions more attractive, strengthen their potential, and significantly improve the quality of life and of work on offer there. This theory was put forward by Willi Kaczorowski and Gerald Swarat in their current book *Smarter Land – von der Smart City zur Digitalen Region (Smart Country – from Smart City to Digital Region)*, and I can only agree. I would encourage the public sector to embark on the journey toward digital transformation and to make the most of its inherent potential.

Budgetary crises, cutbacks, and pressure to be transparent are part of the everyday working lives of many actors in the public sector. At the same time, they are expected to invest in digital transformation. How can these things be reconciled? How can CHG-MERIDIAN help here?

Schöneberg: In our experience, the challenge in the public sector, in particular, is to develop end-to-end business concepts that are not only standardized and transparent but also flexible, determined by public-sector clients themselves, and customized to satisfy their individual requirements. This starts with the individual finance strategies for technology investments that allow public-sector clients to comply with political and legal requirements. It continues with the implementation of the E-Government Act and ends with the TÜV-certified data erasure for all assets. Our online technology and service management tool, TESMA[®], is the answer to the pressure to be transparent.

TESMA[®] brings together all administrative and technical business information and makes it available in real time to a wide range of departments. This reduces the workload at all levels and brings the desired transparency to the processes. TESMA[®] now has over 15,000 users. Since the company was founded in 1979, we have successfully handled a variety of projects in the public sector. We know the market and the political and legal frameworks, are familiar with the specific issues at federal, state, and local level, and have grown with the developments and requirements of the times.

Over the many years that you have worked with public-sector clients, where have you encountered common issues and challenges? And what are the factors that all of your customized business concepts have in common?

Schöneberg: The key point is to see digitalization as an opportunity and to view the change process in a positive light – as the chance to modernize administration and as an investment in the organization's future viability. The mindset of everyone involved should be geared toward this. Digital change is also a cultural change. It requires strategic change thinking and change management, as well as the willingness to abandon silo thinking in favor of networked action. Digital transformation also requires an organizational transformation.

The digitalization of administrative processes results in more efficient performance. E-Government should be approached holistically, i.e. by taking into consideration both internal and external factors. This is the only way that all processes can be optimized and carried out both electronically and in a legally compliant manner. It is also important to understand digital transformation as a process with an open-ended goal. Flexibility and firm strategic guidelines

are equally important, and the focus is on the benefits for citizens, companies, and society. With this in mind, it is crucial for clients to make a comprehensive inventory of their IT infrastructure, to set goals, and to investigate technological megatrends and choose the right ones for their needs.

The infrastructure concept should be designed for the long term and in such a way that it can respond to and address rapid technological change with sufficient flexibility. Data protection also plays a very important role, of course, as do the concerns that this issue raises. This means that the useful life of deployed assets is considerably shorter in a long-term solution due to the rapid progress of technology. At CHG-MERIDIAN, we are familiar with this challenge, and we have the necessary expertise to work within the legal framework and the peculiarities of the public sector. We are also able to provide end-to-end support.

Digitalization affects every single employee. What can the public sector do to get employees on board?

Schöneberg: The fact of the matter is that successful digital transformation depends not only on the latest technology infrastructure but also on employees with digital skills, forward-looking management, and an openness toward new developments. The administration of the future tackles these matters. Modern workplace design and the provision of digital skills training for the entire workforce are key to getting all employees onside and keeping them there. This is where our Employer Benefit Solutions can make a valuable contribution – the employees receive high-quality communication devices that are tax privileged according to section 3 no. 45 of the German Income Tax Act for private use.

This is a benefit that the public sector can offer its workforce, increasing the sector's attractiveness as an employer. It also improves the digital skills of the employees. Another point worth mentioning is that many public-sector employees are approaching retirement, and there is a shortage of young talent. Digitalization also provides benefits in this respect, as shortfalls can be partially overcome through efficient usage concepts and processes can be made more resource-efficient. A modern workplace with intelligent IT solutions is also attractive for young people.

The shift within the public sector toward Administration 4.0 requires solutions that establish evolving digital skills and prepare the workforce for the digital revolution. It also needs visions and ideas for Work 4.0 and a strategy for gradual digital transformation.