OneODT

Our People-Centered Approach to Driving Change at the FDA

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FDA Office of Digital Transformation

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Introduction

The FDA Office of Digital Transformation (ODT) works in full partnership with the agency's business areas to develop, communicate, and oversee the overall vision, strategy, and roadmap for Information Technology (IT), Data, and Cybersecurity at FDA. ODT includes the Office of Information Management and Technology (OIMT), the Office of Information Security (OIS), and the Office of Data, Analytics, and Research (ODAR).

ODT faced immediate change management and organizational development challenges as a new organization.

ODT was established in September 2021 to reorganize the FDA's enterprise IT function. Historically, this area has dealt with significant challenges in communication, stakeholder partnerships, customer experience, employee engagement, and morale. There were also longstanding institutional silos that inhibited our ability to share information and collaborate. Internally, ODT's Executive Officer and the Executive Leadership Team sought to redefine the employee experience, improve communication, and align our collaborative efforts under one clear direction toward achieving ODT's strategic priorities. Our organizational growth and development success depended on a strategic theme that could unify all ODT employees toward our shared vision and goals.

Solutions

In January 2022, ODT kicked off the theme of "OneODT" to create networking opportunities, break down barriers and silos, and tell a story that highlights our work to transform and modernize the FDA's digital landscape. We've led the charge with important strategic efforts to modernize a public health agency, and ensure we receive the most from talent, technology, and budget. Within a single year, a new, fragmented organization has become OneODT.

Aligning our staff and strategic priorities under OneODT has been supported by the following FDA modernization action plans:

- **Technology Modernization Action Plan** – To modernize the FDA's technical infrastructure and operations, enhance agency capabilities to develop technology products, and increase communication and collaboration with external stakeholders to drive technological progress that is interoperable and delivers value to consumers and patients.
- **Data Modernization Action Plan** – To overhaul the FDA's approach to technology and data by developing consistent, repeatable data practices across the Agency, and creating a strong talent network.
- **Enterprise Modernization Action Plan** – To deliver successful cross-agency efforts that optimize common and essential business processes to improve operational efficiency, use of data, and alignment between enterprise goals and investments.
- **Cybersecurity Modernization Action Plan** - To strengthen the FDA's ability to protect sensitive information, modernize cybersecurity capabilities, and improve situational awareness to decrease overall security risks to the Agency.

As part of OneODT:

- *We launched a successful year-long employee engagement and change management campaign to mobilize our workforce of 600 employees and over 2,000 contractors.*
- *We invested in our People and Culture, developing an Executive Officer role, improving talent acquisition, increasing employee retention and engagement, and strengthening an emerging workforce within ODT.*

- *We established Communications and Events and Engagement teams and functions to define and shape our organizational values, culture, and partnerships. We provided ODT-wide training on our new organizational values of Empowerment, Accountability, and Effective Execution.*
- *We developed products and programs to facilitate communication, collaboration, organizational awareness, and transparency.*
- *We strengthened our leadership capabilities through change leadership coaching, performance management training, and establishing a new Human Resources and Legal consulting service.*
- *We invested in ourselves by launching a bold new technology workforce upskilling program called Project UpTech.*
- *We fostered learning and knowledge sharing, releasing FDA Academy, the agency-wide LinkedIn Learning platform, and the FDA Expertise and Research Portal through the FDA Library.*
- *We fostered a culture of belonging by strengthening employee experience and developing a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Action Plan.*
- *We supported our hybrid workforce as part of the FDA Workplace Thrives Program and explored different ways to build community and connection. As part of this work, we established the ODT Virtual Water Cooler, held multiple short "pop-up" events, held weekly 'office hours' to ask questions about hybrid work, established a 'buddy system' for employees returning to the physical office, and created a snack cart to welcome back our teams.*

OneODT enabled coordination and collaboration across the agency and played a role in FDA's IT strategic planning and governing councils. We collaborate with our Center partners and agency stakeholders on the FDA Technology Council and subgroups that direct change, improve processes and services, and help reinforce the FDA's IT infrastructure. Our success in IT, data, and cybersecurity initiatives could not be possible without our strategic partnerships and a central theme like OneODT to help facilitate integration, interconnectedness, and interoperability among people and technology.

People and culture are at the heart of who we are as an organization.

People are foundational to our modernization framework, and by elevating ODT within the FDA, we are strengthening agency-wide collaboration and amplifying our expertise. As part of forming ODT and the #OneODT culture, ODT established the first-ever Executive Officer (EO) role to oversee people and management strategies and operations. This new Executive Leadership Team role provided the vision for important organizational improvements that are still ongoing. ODT also centralized and streamlined Human Capital Management and Administrative Operations under the Division of Management Services. This team focuses on improving talent acquisition, increasing employee retention and engagement, and strengthening an emerging workforce within ODT. Thus far, ODT has delivered updated services in new employee onboarding and orientation, staff training, Human Resources and Legal consulting, leadership coaching, performance management, recognitions, and other staff services.

In November 2021, the FDA Commissioner announced the rollout of the FDA Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Plan, 2022 – 2025. This ambitious plan outlines the strategic objectives the FDA pursues to realize our vision of becoming a fair and united agency that leads the way on DEIA for the Federal government. ODT is taking essential steps to transform our organizational culture and build a more diverse and inclusive working environment for an emerging 21st-century workforce.

ODT is proud to have hosted monthly OneODT events to honor the life and work of women and underrepresented groups, by inviting employees to share their thoughts and experiences. Through open and respectful dialogue, these events raise awareness about our employees' diverse cultures and backgrounds – linking staff in a collective celebration and recognition of our cultural holidays, commemorations, tributes, and traditions and customs represented from all around the country and the globe. ODT will continue to recognize these critical celebrations to honor diversity and build on our progress over the last year.

We recognize that more strategic focus is needed to close the gaps of inequality in the workplace, and uphold values of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). As the FDA DEIA Strategic Plan outlines, our people are our greatest strength in driving mission success. ODT released a DEIA Action Plan in FY23 that outlines seven key objectives, strategies, and key performance indicators and will serve as our roadmap to guide the efforts of all ODT offices in advancing FDA's DEIA Strategic Plan. These plans strive to ensure that our workforce is diverse, engaged, and working in an environment that supports authenticity and belonging.

ODT used events to engage our employees, network, and build team spirit

ODT leveraged technology and digital tools to support communication and foster community and connection. Enabling technology was crucial for supporting organizational development in a hybrid work environment. Examples include Office 365, Teams and ZoomGov meeting services, OneDrive and SharePoint Online, and interactive virtual meeting tools such as polls, Q&As, and whiteboards.

Over 2022, we successfully rolled out several new OneODT events and work functions to help our employees stay connected, learn from each other, showcase our projects and initiatives, and recognize our individual and team accomplishments. OneODT hosted over 30 events and engagements for FDA and ODT staff. These events ranged from Knowledge Cafés about Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy, Customer Experience, and Harnessing Real World Data for COVID-19 to Open Houses providing guided virtual tours of our offices and divisions. We also held monthly Town Halls, Lunch and Learns, Technical Brown Bags, Speed Networking and Mentoring, and other events. ODT was also pleased to roll out "ODT spirit wear" clothing worn by our employees during virtual meetings or in-person events to show that we are #OneODT and #ODTProud of who we are as an organization.

In June, the ODT Senior Leadership Team launched the #ODTCares program, an informal, voluntary program, compliant under FDA Ethics guidelines, that helps contribute gifts for significant employee life events- particularly those experiencing long-term illness or hardship. This program is one way that ODT leaders extend their appreciation and help cultivate a culture of caring and belonging.

We aligned our collaborative and communication efforts with ODT's strategic priorities to enhance organizational excellence.

The theme of OneODT helped us tell a story and build camaraderie with our staff and partners through communication, information sharing, learning, and direct engagements. To help tell our story, ODT hosted monthly Town Halls with ODT staff to present news and updates about the latest projects and initiatives and how they map back to our vision and strategic priorities. Most importantly, these events served as a forum to discuss the ongoing efforts and initiatives to implement the agency's modernization, and strategic action plans to improve IT, data, and cybersecurity at the FDA. Vid Desai, Chief Information Officer (CIO), provided opening remarks, answered questions and addressed concerns from employees during the "Ask Vid Anything" session.

Every month, we recognize our staff's the tireless efforts and outstanding work. This year, we're proud to have unveiled the ODT Challenge Coin and the ODT Collaborator Challenge Coin, our organization's most prestigious award for recognizing individuals who demonstrate outstanding work and exemplify ODT's core values. The ODT Town Halls were opportunities for our employees to participate in discussions, openly share their experiences, ideas, opinions, and concerns, and engage their colleagues in group chat discussions.

A unified message via 'One ODT, One Voice'

'One ODT, One Voice' is an idea we promote internally to encourage our staff to speak with one clear, unified voice. A consolidated and streamlined communications approach began with an overhaul of our existing communication activities to facilitate improvement and overcome our communication challenges. We established

an enterprise ODT Communications Team, developed a communications service model, and implemented new policies, processes, and procedures. These efforts have aligned ODT's communications within the framework of our strategic priorities. We established the ODT Communications Advisory Board with members from all ODT offices and divisions to facilitate and coordinate communications, events, and engagements for both internal and public audiences. We also established ODT Central, a one-stop-shop location on SharePoint Online for our organization to share news, documents, and resources internally with our staff.

ODT produces various communication products as an IT, data, and cybersecurity organization. At the FDA, we've streamlined our primary internal communications through the release and publication of the *IT Weekly* report and the monthly *ODT Insights Newsletter,* sharing these products FDA-wide to highlight the latest IT news, events, use cases, and customer success stories. To provide transparency into who we are and the value we deliver, ODT worked with the FDA Office of External Affairs (OEA) to build an enhanced web presence on FDA.gov. This new site provides public information about our strategic priorities, leadership profiles, organizational charts, reports, and more. ODT also established a page on LinkedIn, and we've expanded our social media presence to communicate better news and announcements to the broader professional and industry communities.

Project UpTech and FDA Academy provided upskilling opportunities for FDA staff.

Continuous learning drives innovative change at FDA, and ODT is leading the charge. We asked ourselves how might we cultivate a highly skilled and future-ready technology workforce? The answer, we discovered, was to provide the FDA with new professional development opportunities through ODT's Project UpTech. Project UpTech's goal is to provide training that bridges gaps between FDA's new technology capabilities and digital literacy skills.

In July 2022, ODT announced the release of FDA Academy, an enterprise instance of LinkedIn Learning. This work was championed by the FDA Library, a component of ODT, to advance Project UpTech by providing quality and cost-effective courses to all FDA employees on various IT, project management, and other professional topics. LinkedIn Learning is an e-learning platform that offers on-demand access to over 16,000 expert-led courses. This resource enables FDA staff to create customized learning paths, utilizing LinkedIn Learning videos and external videos. As of November 2022, 5,612 employees are using LinkedIn Learning and have completed 17,000 courses. What started as an internal OneODT initiative known as ODT Academy Summer became a valuable service for all FDA staff to learn new professional skills, improve their existing skills, and acquire continuous education credits for various accredited certification programs.

We recognize the demand to improve proficiency across all skills. As ODT is building learning pathways with LinkedIn Learning courses, we are exploring expanding learning and development opportunities to improve the current training portfolio. The planned changes include shifting from low value training to high-value certifications, action learning, and immersive rotational opportunities for upskilling and reskilling the FDA workforce.

Knowledge sharing and collaboration opportunities

ODT focused on improving our knowledge sharing capabilities and creating opportunities for collaboration as part of OneODT. First, we needed to get to know each other within ODT. We asked staff to update their Microsoft Office 365 profiles with information about their roles, skills, and interests. ODT also published the first staff-level organizational charts to visualize where each person in the Office fits into the big picture. We hosted speed networking events to quickly meet new people and learn about their roles on the team. Finally, ODT leaders implemented an Open Door Policy and encouraged Skip Level Meetings to bridge the gap between leaders and staff to facilitate more open conversations.
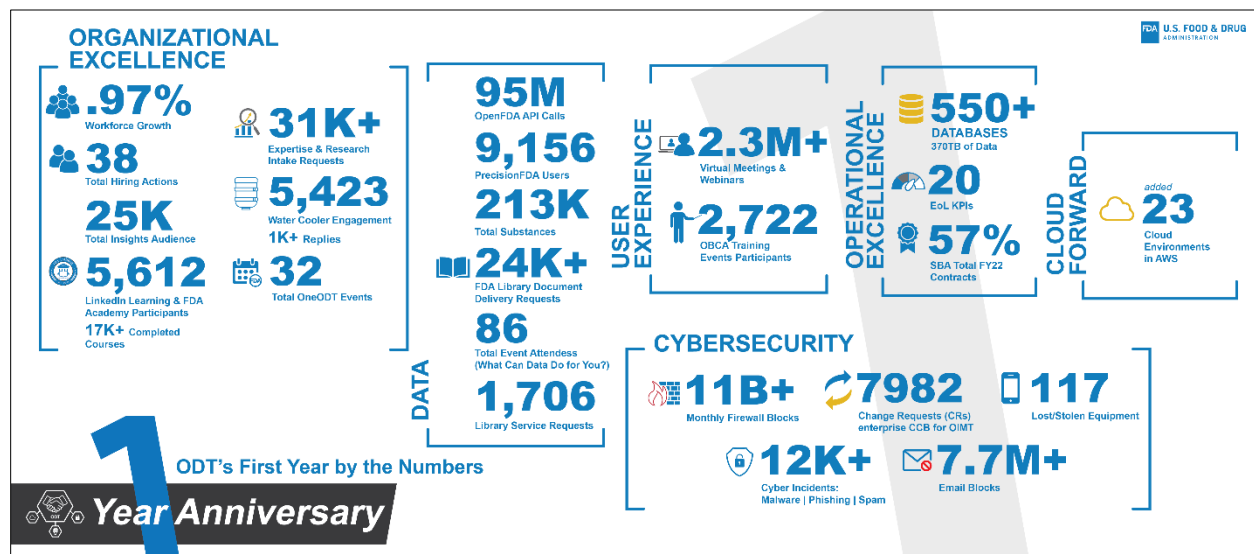
Next, ODT needed to focus on sharing expertise with broader audiences. In March 2022, the FDA Library announced the launch of the FDA Expertise and Research Portal, a centralized, automated tool for finding FDA experts and linking to their work products and outputs. ODT hosted Knowledge Cafes to provide an opportunity

for staff to learn about cutting-edge technologies and capabilities, such as customer experience and artificial intelligence. An average of 122 people attended each Café. ODT's Communications Team also started publishing Technology Council and subcommittee meeting summaries to ensure everyone across the agency had open access to strategic discussions and decisions that were previously "closed door."

Launching these strategies, events, and resources for ODT and FDA demonstrates that OneODT is not just a strategic theme exclusive to us as an organization but our commitment to connect, teach and learn from our colleagues, partners, stakeholders, and customers across the agency. ODT will host the upcoming inaugural 2022 FDA Digital Transformation Symposium to expand our connection with internal and external partners. The Symposium will include a variety of keynote speakers, Center and ODT success stories, a video highlight gallery, and more. Participants will also learn about FDA's IT vision and strategic direction while sharing information with industry, tech, and vendor communities. The Symposium will be augmented by future learning and outreach events for different stakeholder groups.

Conclusion

ODT closed Fiscal Year 2022 by hosting an all-day ODT Summit for ODT employees and contractors to reflect on accomplishments from the past year, progress, and plans for the future of each strategic priority. CIO Vid Desai opened the Summit with keynote remarks focused on common issue areas which he characterized as "big elephants", the sizable issues that require time, effort, and resources to address. Each member of the Executive Leadership Team presented at least one strategic priority and provided attendees with an opportunity to ask questions. Over 500 people attended the Summit, with an overall satisfaction rating of 94%. Employees later attended a virtual happy hour to celebrate the success of the team.

Our journey toward organizational excellence is ongoing as we advance our ambitious modernization plans. To continue building a better organization, we're focused on mission needs, standards and compliance, costs, agility and interoperability, and none of this is possible without one key ingredient: People.

People are the key to the success or failure of modernization initiatives, and brave leaders and changemakers pave the path to transformation. Building the top technology, data, and cybersecurity organization in government requires cultivating the best workforce and workplace that can respond to challenges today and in the future, embraces a capacity for change and innovation, and conducts strategic planning to keep us on track to achieve greatness. OneODT is how we get there.

People, culture, and organizational excellence are at the heart of our ODT establishment and digital transformation journey. Our organizational effectiveness depends on data-driven metrics to inform decision-making, close collaboration, coordination, and communication with our partners and colleagues, and challenging rigid organizational structures to be more agile and open. By breaking down barriers and eliminating silos, ODT has leveraged our organization's transformational skills and talents to cultivate cross-division relationships, modernize technologies at the FDA, and generate results that demonstrate high value to the agency's mission.

Leadership transformation and the 'Future CIO'

ODT will develop the next generation of brave leaders who contribute to business strategy and exemplify principles of leadership, communication, engagement, and collaboration. The 'Future CIO' is a change agent that translates technology potential into business strategy and value and demonstrates 'smart skills;' including creativity, empathy, resiliency, and motivation. By rethinking the traditional leadership paradigm, we are cultivating an organization that trains government leaders and business co-creators to understand how to shift roles and focus, upskill themselves and their colleagues, and improve the customer experience under a unified strategy. We call this the "Everyone a Changemaker Effect," meaning that when everyone leads in every moment, the speed of change accelerates. OneODT has helped us alter our "business as usual" mindset to reimagine our capabilities as agents of change for the FDA. As part of this effort, ODT will publish the Leadership Modernization Action Plan (LMAP) to provide a roadmap for developing modern leadership and management principles necessary to drive innovation and change.

Organizational change, growth, and development are challenges that exist in any industry. The reorganization of offices, overhauling processes and procedures, and realigning priorities can cause a sense of whiplash across an organization and may impact team morale. What ODT has learned over the last year is that clear and transparent communication, modern technology tools, and an inviting strategic theme that unifies a workforce toward common goals will help an organization overcome those challenges.

OneODT has been a rallying cry this past year to establish our organizational identity and culture. Much of our work is shifting fast, and we need to be ready. We are moving from an initial start-up phase to address our organizational growth and development challenges – OneODT – to a broader FDA enterprise transformation we're calling "All FDA." Our model for organizational excellence is grounded in our shared values and will serve as the roadmap to building the leading technology, data, and cybersecurity organization in government. Together, we will cultivate a federal model of a world-class people-centered organization. The journey continues, and we are ready!