

DISPELLING THE MYTHS: Westchester County is Leading the Charge in Innovative Government IT



Interview with John McCaffrey
CIO of Westchester County

DOER. DREAMER. DRIVER.

“Are you a doer, dreamer, or driver?”

John McCaffrey, CIO of Westchester County, recently named as one of the country's top 25 Doers, Dreamers and Drivers for 2017 by *Government Technology* magazine (GT), pauses briefly, then replies.

“I honestly think I’m all of those,” he says.

McCaffrey’s resume and history back up the claim. The dynamic IT leader fulfills the requirements of “Doer” with 30-plus years of hands-on experience in virtually all areas of IT. He has been a developer, mainframe operator, network analyst, desktop analyst, database administrator, and security officer – and those are only some of his roles.

McCaffrey the “Dreamer” is always looking for new and innovative ways his department can service the community. “What can we do that’s new and different that can make it better for the constituents and citizens?” as he puts it.

And McCaffrey is always driving, “not technology, but innovation and business process.” He also drives people to do their best. “What can we do to make things easier for an employer, citizen, or employee?”

GT’s list recognizes “change makers inside and outside of government who have proven what a valuable tool technology can be in making the promise of responsive, customer-focused government real.”

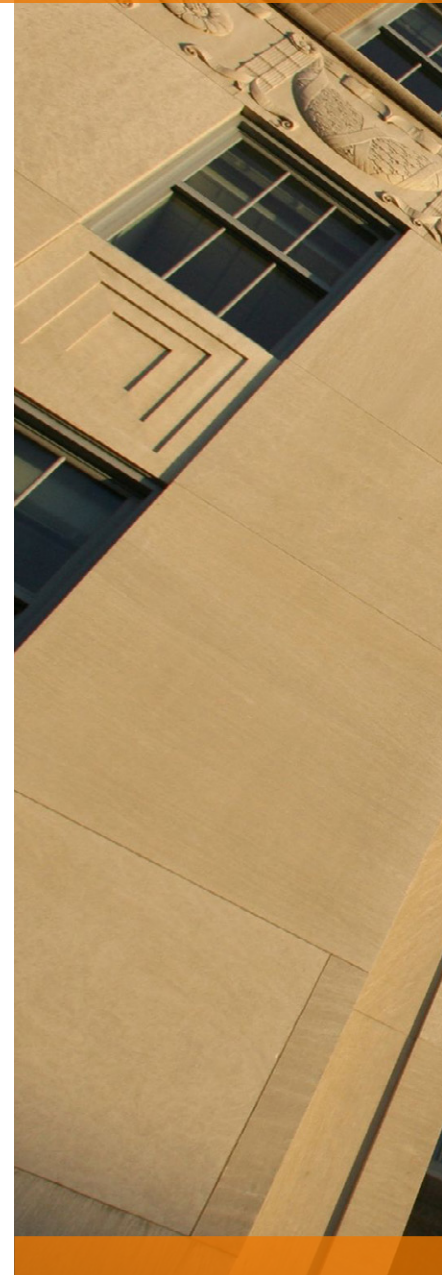
And that’s not the only recognition McCaffrey and his team have received. The 140-person IT organization that serves 30 divisions, 7,000 users, and 6,000 endpoints also earned the top spot in the 2017 Digital Counties Survey for populations of 500,000 to a million. The survey honors leading counties for programs that encourage government innovation and collaboration. It was the fifth year in a row that Westchester made the Top 10 list.


“The simple answer is remaining innovative,” McCaffrey responds when asked how he and his group have managed to gain such nationwide recognition. “The bigger answer though is creating the environment to promote innovation. My

focus is about the people in this department and the people county-wide.”

“It’s not just what IT is doing,” McCaffrey says of the award. “It involves every department being progressive and thinking about what we can do better and what’s next. It’s a collaborative push-pull attitude.”

“But like I tell my staff,” McCaffrey says, “We don’t work to win awards. We win awards because we work the way we do.”





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FROM SERVICE PROVIDER TO **TRUSTED ADVISOR**

McCaffrey became CIO in 2012 and had one immediate goal.

“I wanted to change the perception of IT as a necessary evil to a trusted partner and advisor,” he recalls. “I had to start by changing that mentality with my own staff and then by conveying that from top to bottom of the organization that this was going to be our approach.”

He began an advanced technologies group and provided a budget to investigate appropriate new ideas. The group has looked at cloud computing, web development, block chain, Internet of Things, and other areas of interest.

“I started getting requests from people who wanted to join that group. It’s that kind of transformation to

the staff to be thinkers. My job is to create a good environment for the people here so that we do good things.”

McCaffrey develops that type of workplace by promoting ideas, delegating tasks, and empowering his people.

“Empowerment is critical especially in IT,” he says. “If no one else is available, sometimes you just have to

make the call. You can make the wrong call, but as long as your wrong call wasn’t averse to some direction we’ve laid out, I’m going to stand by you in making that call because you used your best judgement to do so.”

NO TECHNOLOGY FOR TECHNOLOGY'S SAKE

While driving innovation is a constant theme in Westchester County, McCaffrey recognizes that technology is not always the answer.

"For the last twenty years, regardless of where I've been, I've always preached no technology for technology's sake," McCaffrey says. "First let's look at the business process and determine whether the solution needs technology. It's not always necessary to build a database or write an application. It may just be process improvement. We've become the center of process transformation for this administration."

"I was hired because I was not only an IT person, but a finance person," he goes on. "I always talk about ROI for citizens, which people don't really talk about. It's common in the corporate world, but people in government don't really talk about ROI for taxpayers. I do."

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MAJOR PROJECTS

Westchester County's IT organization is responsible for core IT functions as well as county-wide public safety radio communications, 911 communication infrastructure for 40+ public safety organizations, records management and archiving, and IT shared services for virtually every city, town, and village in the county.

McCaffrey and his team are in the middle of several major projects. They are promoting shared services throughout the county as well looking at cloud infrastructure, working on disaster recovery and business continuity systems, and focusing on cybersecurity solutions.

"Cybersecurity has been at the top of the list of ten things that are concerning to government IT organizations for the past three years," McCaffrey says. "We continue to broaden and look at new tools and methodologies."

McCaffrey is most excited about two projects focused on public safety. They are two-thirds of the way through





replacing all the public safety access points and equipment for 911 and putting in next generation 911 systems in 40+ police and public safety agencies. The second is a \$30 million county-wide public safety radio system replacement project.

“This is exciting to me personally because it hits in so many places in a way I haven’t been involved in before,” he says. “I’ve had quite a bit of experience in wireless data communications, but now we’re talking RF/radio for voice communications. It involves legislative areas, regulation areas, as well as FCC and federal requirements. In addition, building out this new network is most likely going to involve the increase in the number of towers we have which will involve me in leasing arrangements and new real estate acquisitions as to where we are going to place these towers. The exciting part for me is that I am getting to go into so many areas that I never really dealt with before.”

LEVERAGING THE DYNTEK PARTNERSHIP

Chances are, regardless of where the business takes McCaffrey, he will be heading there with DynTek firmly in tow.

“I want our other divisions, departments, and outside agencies, to look at us as a trusted partner and advisor in the same way I feel about our DynTek partnership,” says

McCaffrey. “I first talked to DynTek when I was the CIO in Orange County and my rep was fighting for us to get a demo box for a longer period of time. Just in discussing this with him after hours I remember thinking to myself, ‘this is the kind of organization that we need at our disposal.’ The relationship grew from there.”

DynTek has partnered with Westchester County on a number of initiatives since then including implementing a Citrix App Virtualization and VDI solution, storage and UCS server infrastructure, as well as Windows XP migration to Windows 7 and Windows 10.

McCaffrey recalls a situation that epitomized the value and partnership DynTek represents to him and his organization.

“I was the tech liaison for the Orange County Business Accelerator and they had contracted with a vendor for voice services and the project was falling apart,” he recalls. “I called DynTek and within a day or two they had people with boots on the ground and got things happening. We were so pleased because we had been fighting for weeks to get voice service and within a week DynTek had gotten people on site and remotely redoing network and voice configurations and got us up and running. That’s just the additional proof that DynTek could come through

and bring the resources to bear that were needed for any situation that we called on.”

“Sometimes we call DynTek just to get advice,” McCaffrey continues. “We ask where we should be looking and know that we have a good resource and partner. They are partners with a number of organizations and they look out and say this is probably the best solution for Westchester. They lay out the good, the bad and the ugly. And I know even there I am going to get reliable, confident and vendor agnostic judgement on what we should do. And then they will make one or two vendor recommendations, some of whom they don’t even do business with. I know that, my staff knows that and that’s a big piece of why I just look and say DynTek is a trusted adviser, partner, and comes through in a pinch.”

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Partner
Platinum
Solution Advisor
Specialist

WESTCHESTER COUNTY MOVES TO VDI WITH CITRIX

The Westchester County IT group was fighting a battle to move off Windows XP into a VDI environment, but didn't have the staff or requisite expertise to make it happen. They focused on the 1,500 desktops in the social services department and were struggling with third-party vendors to accomplish the conversion.

Westchester investigated several VDI options including VMware and Microsoft, but the presentations and case study successes of Citrix stood above the others. DynTek was able to highlight other successful implementations in similar organizations. Westchester realized they could overcome the challenges by implementing a Citrix App Virtualization and VDI solution.

They identified 500 desktops that performed essentially the same tasks with regards to homelessness, temporary assistance, and SNAP

services. They moved forward with DynTek to implement the Citrix VDI solution for this group.

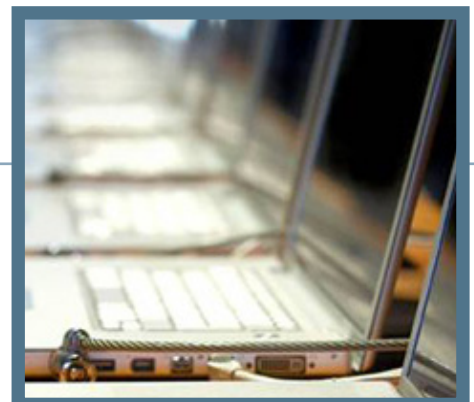
DynTek performed a complete assessment of Westchester's environment and proceeded to help coordinate the construction of a storage, server, and virtualization infrastructure.

"The project was well planned out and we worked together to overcome the inevitable glitches that arose," said John McCaffrey, CIO of Westchester. "DynTek and Citrix were diligent in making things right, working through the night in many cases to resolve issues. Overall, it was probably one of the most difficult times for us to get through in terms of a project implementation, but thanks to a collaborative partnership between the IT staff, social services staff, DynTek and Citrix we were able to get through it."

The implementation has significantly enhanced the mobility of the social services group.

"The staff now loves that they can go from office to office and they can pick up and work on the same desktop," said McCaffrey. "They are pushing for us to expand the VDI environment to other departments of the organization. It is the direction we are going."

"We've done everything possible to extend the life of their desktops and keep costs down moving from a four-year to five-year to in some cases a seven-year replacement schedule," said McCaffrey. "Now with VDI, I'm not worried about replacement schedules. It has been effective and serves us well and we are going to build on it county-wide."



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