NASA contact tracing:

Keeping employees safe from COVID transmission

Suddenly grounded

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is responsible for civilian space programs and aeronautics and space research. NASA's vision is to discover and expand knowledge for the benefit of humanity. Following the successful launch of a Mars rover and safely bringing home astronauts from low- Earth orbit aboard a new commercial spacecraft, NASA has been focused on its Artemis program— to send the first woman and next man to the Moon by 2024, establish sustainable exploration of the Moon, and to use what is learned on and around the Moon to send astronauts to Mars. The agency plans to enable NASA to safely return over 60,000 contractor employees and almost 20 thousand civil service employees by tracking via a modern unified application.

NASA is accustomed to dealing with unforeseen obstacles, but the pandemic of 2020 had the potential to seriously hamper the Artemis program. The organization would have to apply its innovative spirit to the vital goal of keeping its employees healthy.

In response to COVID-19, NASA announced mandatory telework for all personnel except for employees required for mission-essential work, and developed policies pertaining to the CDC, federal, state and local guidance to monitor its workforce.

While personnel were taking extra precautions, agency leadership continued to develop and implement policies and procedures to enhance safety in the workplace. As employees began to return to the space centers for work, the space center developed and implemented policies and procedures for workforce contact tracing manually via paper and spreadsheets depending on center. However, with these processes, agency leaders observed a lack of consistency and scalability, posing potential risks for employees. They investigated options for a digital contact tracing solution with a robust framework for all centers to adopt and pursued an Accenture solution powered by Salesforce that could be built and deployed quickly.

When tech meets human ingenuity

Making contact

Accenture had previously enabled State and Local governments to react fast and effectively to COVID-19 by rolling out Salesforce Contact Tracing applications. Accenture's Salesforce, telephony and analytics expertise led to technical solution launch for a US state within just nine days, followed by a ramp up of 200 volunteer contact tracers within the first three weeks, and another 1,000 tracers the following week. With this success, the NASA solution leveraged a pre-packaged asset to accelerate delivery of a unified solution. With Accenture's Federal Government and Salesforce experience, NASA designed and implemented a digital solution integrated with the Salesforce Service Cloud platform within four weeks of the project's start.

A safe space

With Accenture's speedy and scalable solution, NASA is using the Salesforce platform to bring employees back to the workplace safely while progressing on its mission. Accenture provided NASA visibility throughout the design and build process, proactively adjusting the application to meet users' needs. The outcomes delivered from this effort include:

- Starting and finishing technical deployment within just four weeks
- Deploying solution to 80 medical contact tracers for a population of over 60,000 contractor employees and almost 20 thousand civil service employees

- Scaling the solution to include email integrations
- Offering outbound anonymized executive level Tableau reporting
- Developing capabilities for future integration with Office365 for meeting, people, and location data
- Linking to security operation systems like Splunk and NuVision

NASA can safely and securely limit the spread of disease with this solution and can continue to expand it to integrate with access management and HR systems as well as smart devices for enhanced intelligent contact tracing.

Now that NASA can more easily keep its people healthy on Earth, it can keep shooting for the moon—and beyond.

The NASA Contact Tracking and Tracing application is available for download by appropriate federal agencies through GSA.