

Transforming HII: Information Technology Response to COVID-19

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Voice of Mike Petters, president and CEO, Huntington Ingalls Industries:

We changed our posture from let's have everybody be working on site, to let's have as many people working off-site as possible, and today we have about 25% of our workforce working remotely in support of our customers and in support of the missions that our customers are asking us to support.

Bharat Amin, executive vice president and CIO

COVID hit and a decision was made that a lot of our professionals who can work from home need to work from home. It became, actually, a challenge and you know, as they say, necessity is the mother of invention, right. So, our IT teams were kind of on a main-stage focus to say: "How do we keep our professional workers who can work remotely, working?"

Our normal capacity, that we used to see, was more around 1,000 people on a given day we would see working from home. And suddenly, overnight, there was a demand to go 25% more, so that's 2,500 to 3,000 people.

Brian Fields, vice president, business transformation and CIO, Newport News Shipbuilding

There's really two sides to that equation to make that successful. First, is making sure that we had the right infrastructure in place to support that. Prior to this we had, at any given time, 500 to 700 people working remotely. Those people were not just Newport News Shipbuilding employees, but suppliers and various contractors that we worked with that we gave our devices to be able to work and collaborate with us. So we had some experience in that regards, but we estimated that we could see between 6,000 and 7,000 people full-time working from home, as we queried the business.

Bharat Amin

We needed to make sure that we maintained the same posture of security as if you're working from work, working at work actually, not at home. So, we had to come up with some approaches and say: "What are the threats when people work from home?" So we thought about things like how could you be safe in the environment where you need to work, and we gave them advice on the kind of things you should turn off while working from home. So, we were able to send that kind of a message out to everyone.

You know, there's always a threat when you go outside of the work environment. The good thing for us is that, you know, we don't allow connectivity without a company computer. We don't allow home computers, so that's a protective approach to it.

Noel Prevost, information systems manager, Ingalls Shipbuilding

We're tightly integrated with our business partners here and that allows us to quickly respond to action items as they came up. Our HR, IT and Operations, as well as our payroll system, had to come up with a way to be able to allow a liberal leave policy to be implemented. So essentially, we had to quickly come up with a workaround on how we could not penalize people for taking advantage of a liberal leave policy for being able to miss work when they needed to. Whether that was responsibilities due to daycares and school closures or taking care of elderly family members. Having our teams tightly integrated with the business allowed us to respond much quicker developing a plan, implementing it, having the end users test it and then roll it out to the production environment.

Brian Fields

Having a culture of change enables new changes to come in and be accepted faster and get the results faster. This pandemic was just a large, across-the-business, and everybody had to change at the same time. I think that our digital transformation really had given us a running start at our culture embracing doing something different.