# USPS OIG Delivers on Service Outage Probe and Five-Year Strategic Plan

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Imagine that you’re in charge of an organization with nationwide reach, one that regularly visits the front doorstep of every street address in America, and one that pledges delivery of service under any kind of condition including snow, rain, heat, and “gloom of night.” Today, keeping that promise requires maintaining the highest levels of visibility into IT issues to keep network functions online and manage advanced data analytics.

That’s exactly what the United States Postal Service (USPS) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) set out to do, starting in 2012, with the deployment of big data analytics and the addition of a new role – the manager of data analytics.

Bill Rickett holds this position today in the Office of Audit, Information Technology, Office of the Inspector General, USPS. At ServiceNow’s Knowledge 19 conference on May 7, Rickett explained that OIG’s mission is to foster integrity by detecting and preventing fraud, waste, and abuse – and that technology and innovation are vital to this mission.

Initially, the team’s data analytics focus was on cybersecurity and creating an IT risk model for audit planning and research. Rickett explained they selected two metrics to track – spam and malware – between 2013 and 2015. They would sort and rank the threats and provide reports. Next, the team expanded to focus on IT Service Management (ITSM), specifically incident response, and implemented ServiceNow.

OIG used the platform strictly for IT audits initially, and then expanded to all types of audits across their six directorates: planning, operations, finance, delivery/customer experience, IT, and supply chain/HR management – sharing data back with each directorate much more quickly than possible in the past.

“This started to allow us to manage the relationships and see correlations between the directorates,” Rickett said.

In one example, Rickett explained that to help identify insurance fraud, the team executed a zip code analysis, identifying areas with an enormous number of USPS insurance claims – significantly outside of the norm.

In 2018 following an outage where internal and external networks dropped offline, OIG used the ServiceNow platform to execute an Availability for Tier 1 Business Critical Services Audit.

They team was able to identify the problem, expose the root causes, and find a lasting fix. OIG pulled data from multiple applications to review together in the ServiceNow platform – incidents, change requests, problem investigations.

Debra Gilkey, IT Auditor at the USPS OIG explained they gathered data and visualized that data from different fields including business categories, business services, and incident creation dates. USPS was able to use the information collected through the audit to visualize data categories, create data storyboards, and unlock meaning from the information.

“We finished our audit back in September, and published the findings back to the American people,” said Gilkey.

In conjunction with the probe, the team also identified and mitigated a related $6.7 million potential revenue loss.

One of ServiceNow’s advantages is central plug in capabilities with other application tools, Gilkey added. USPS OIG is using the Splunk plug-in through ServiceNow and TeamMate to capture audit reports.

The visual storyboards, created with Microsoft Power BI from data pulled from ServiceNow, were significantly more effective than spreadsheet presentations used in the past.

“We are now creating visualizations for all our audits,” Rickett said. He noted they can share the visualizations with the directorates “and get immediate impact…we call it quick insights.”

Gilkey said the USPS OIG team also simplified alert management and priority lists with ServiceNow. The team can account for incident numbers at high-priority and critical-priority levels, and identify incidents with downgraded priority levels – including why and when. This was an important update for USPS, as the previous system set priorities at initial levels and with no ability to update status.

The ability to grab a field and drill down to see sublayers in ServiceNow is also very helpful, Gilkey noted. The analysts can identify outliers to help prioritize and maximize the team’s time and attention.

Going forward, USPS OIG will continue to deliver against a strategic five-year plan. Goals include evolving postal operations, developing the mission staff, and encouraging a performance culture with increasingly challenging and satisfying work that focuses on what matters — adding value to the USPS mission – from avoiding network downtown to detecting and preventing fraud, waste, and abuse. That’s how USPS OIG delivers.