

Kastling Helps U.S. Agencies Modernize Systems with Axure

THE OPPORTUNITY

The U.S. Federal Government spends an estimated \$80 billion a year on information technology, the vast majority of it for maintaining legacy systems. Tony Scott, the government's top Chief Information Officer, has identified a need to shift investments towards [modern systems that emphasize user experience](#). The [White House](#) also is committed to creating new digital avenues for citizens to interact with federal agencies and improving accessibility to existing systems.

For contractors and federal agencies alike, there is an opportunity to create user-centric software systems that deliver significant savings in development, training, maintenance and reduction in errors that cost taxpayers [billions of dollars each year](#). "We have a tremendous opportunity to modernize the federal government's software systems and make it more usable for millions of people," said Charlotte Lee, Kastling's Chief Executive and Co-Founder.

KASTLING

ABOUT KASTLING GROUP

Kastling Group offers in strategic management, analysis, and implementation of enterprise systems. Adjacent to the heart of the nation's capitol in Crystal City, Va., the firm specializes in helping Federal agencies modernize their enterprise software systems in a way that introduces user-centered designs and is compatible with legacy systems. Kastling's past clients include:

- U.S. Department of Defense
- U.S. Patent and Trademark Office
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection

THE CHALLENGE

The opportunity to reshape federal IT systems comes with challenges unique to the federal space. Because government systems are complex and interdependent, each project must be precisely scoped so as to not interfere with other projects. As a result, federal projects rely heavily on comprehensive analysis of business processes. "Just because I can design it doesn't mean I should build it," Lee said. "That's where our perspective as business analysts plays a critical role."

Security is also a major concern for federal clients, many of whom prefer downloaded software tools such as Axure, rather than Web-based tools, which are perceived to be less secure.

Finally, any work on federal systems must comply with [Section 508 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act](#), which ensures that federal systems be accessible to people with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities.

WORKING WITH AXURE

Getting the green light on federal projects require careful up-front planning and scoping. For contractors, this stage is critical to winning contracts and is often done prior to entering agreements with agencies.

“Our federal clients working on modernization projects care first and foremost about functionality,” Lee said. “They focus on functionality, preserving the process, and accomplishing business needs according to the agency’s mission. It’s very goal-oriented.”

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- Charlotte Lee

Because agencies are so mission focused, Kastling works hard to involve stakeholders in its design process. “We project designs on the wall, and we talk about them with our clients to gather immediate feedback. The involvement turns into a bonfire. That level of involvement is only possible with visualization software such as Axure.”

Kastling also uses Axure to more precisely craft proposals. “It allows us to show in advance what the system will look like and how it will work,” Lee said. “When clients can see and interact with the Axure prototypes we create, they’re able to give us immediate feedback. We’re able to quickly integrate that feedback into a proposal that’s much closer to what they want. This dramatically increases the chances of us winning the contract.”

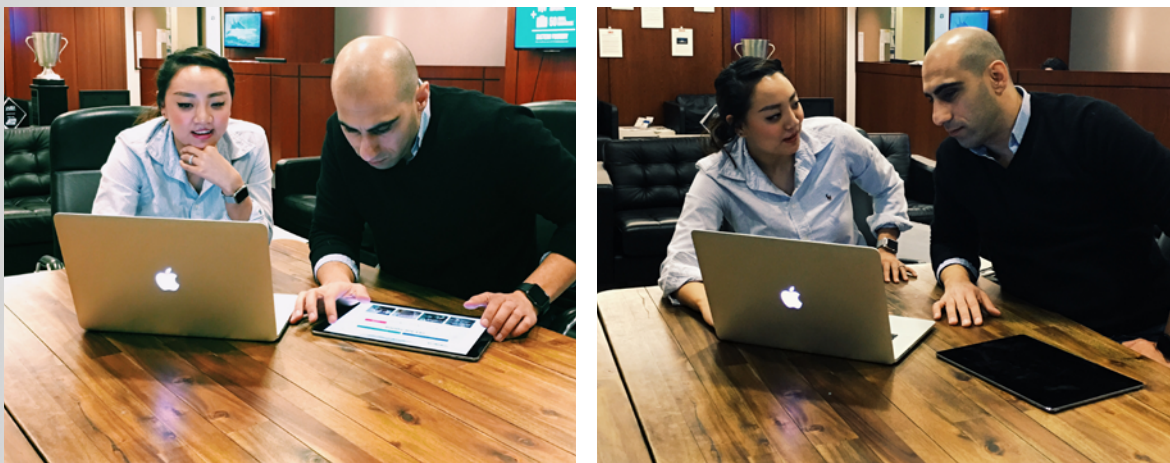
Prototypes also help Kastling better define project scope—a critical challenge in working with federal agencies. “With prototypes, you can pinpoint exactly what is in scope and what is out of scope,” Lee said. “When we can all come to an agreement using Axure, you will always get what you see. This cuts down on the cost of rework.”

BUILDING AN AGILE TEAM

Among Lee's top priorities in building Kastling is assembling a well rounded team of consultants empowered to move quickly and adapt to new challenges. Although Kastling consultants bring unique skills to the table, each is able to communicate ideas with the rest of the team by using Axure to visually demonstrate what they mean. Team sizes can range from three to 25 contributors, including agency product owners, business analysts, user experience designers, and developers.

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- Charlotte Lee



Charlotte Lee, CEO and co-founder of Kastling Group, and Babak Sha, Chief Creative Officer, in their offices in Crystal City, Va.
Photo Credit: Carol Baddour

Having a design tool that's easy for all team members to pick up while powerful enough to go from low-fidelity wireframes and user flows to high-fidelity prototypes and interactions was critical to Lee, who wanted Kastling's consultants to hit the ground running. “Because Axure was so easy to learn, anyone on the team is able to quickly use it to augment their existing roles with other roles as needed,” she said. “Business analysts like myself use it to elevate our presence and role in the team.

“We also use Axure to implement Lean UX methods. Developers know exactly what they need to build. It's instantaneous interpretation, which means I can spend more time planning and less time fixing.”

THE RESULTS

Working in rapid iterations, Kastling's designers are able to stay ahead of developers by one sprint. "Because developers know exactly what needs to be built through our Axure specifications, I'm free to spend my time designing the next sprint," Lee said. "This means I can work 50% faster."

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There's also less rework once Kastling delivers its products. "The prototypes and specifications we create in Axure at the beginning of each cycle to define the project scope answer far more questions than anything we produce with text alone. It means there are no surprises," Lee said. "Having the requirements visualized in mockups and prototypes also adds 100% accountability for our federal clients and for us as the developers. As projects proceed, we're all able to refer back to our work in Axure to see what we've agreed on."

The ability to work faster, cut down cost and manage scope allows Kastling to focus on quality. "My business prospects are limitless because of our ability to more accurately visualize and communicate with Axure," Lee said.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact us at sales@axure.com or call us at **800-895-0810**

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