



**Regulation Matters:
a CLEAR conversation**

Episode 105: From Workarounds to Modernization – Rethinking “The Way We’ve Always Done It”

September 8, 2026

Line Dempsey: Welcome back to our podcast, Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation. Once again, I'm your host, Line Dempsey. I'm currently the Chief Compliance Officer with Riccobene Associates Family Dentistry. We have practices in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. I've also been a board member and past president for CLEAR.

Now, as many of you are aware, the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation, or CLEAR, is an association of individuals, agencies, and organizations that comprise the international community of professional and occupational regulation. This podcast is an opportunity for you to hear about important topics in our regulatory community.

Today, we're going to be discussing technology modernization initiatives. Joining us, we have Liz Searock. She is the Director of Governmental and Public Affairs at the Oklahoma Department of Labor, and Connie Pearson, General Manager for Oklahoma with Tyler Technologies. CLEAR thanks Tyler Technologies for being our premier partner at the supporter level for 2025-2026, and we're glad to have you all with us today. So thank you for being with us.

Connie Pearson: Thanks for having us.

Liz Searock: Thank you.

Line: So, Liz, I understand that your agency has recently gone through a technology modernization. We have all probably been in workplaces or situations where we're struggling or frustrated with outdated technologies. So, before beginning that actual search for the new solution, what kind of challenges or limitations were you experiencing with your existing systems and the processes?

Liz: Well, I think one of our biggest challenges was the age of our systems. Some have been in place for decades, and they were working well, and they served their purpose, but they were built for a very different time, and they just weren't designed for the way people expect to interact with government now. So, we had multiple databases. We had Microsoft Access; we had multiple databases and

spreadsheets and paper files and a lot of manual processes that had developed over years. They all worked. And our employees had become very good at making them work. So, probably too good, because they were doing a lot of workarounds, and this was all happening behind the scenes, and it was very slow. And these are things our customers would never see. So, our staff might have to enter information more than once, or move information between different systems, or track things manually, or literally physically move paperwork from one place to another. So it wasn't really a matter of saying, ‘Nothing works;’ it was more a matter of saying, ‘This isn't sustainable anymore.’

And I think customers' expectations had changed, too. Our citizens had changed. So, you know, our customers and citizens wanted to be able to apply for a license online, and they wanted to renew their licenses online, or upload a document, or make a payment, or check a status without having to come into our office or mail something in. But none of our systems were built for that. So, we knew we wanted to improve our customer service. And help our employees, too. You know, they've been working with these systems forever. So, it wasn't that our old systems didn't work, because they did, they just weren't modern.

Line: Right. So, were there specific measures that you focused on to determine that, you know, these are challenging, such as the processing time or staff efficiency? I'm sure that people with institutional knowledge that had been there for a long time knew how to navigate this system, if you would, but when you had new employees, was that also a hurdle? What were the things that you needed to focus on for improving this customer satisfaction, the workplace capacity, and even regulatory compliance?

Liz: Well, for us, it was really a combination of all those things. We were looking at processing times, and staff efficiency, and our citizens' experiences. Our data accuracy, and how we could manage our regulatory responsibilities. So, I think one of the biggest measures was simply how much effort would it take to complete something that should be so simple, such as a welder's license. So, if an employee had to enter the same information into multiple systems, that's time we could be spending serving our customer. Or if someone had to call our office just to find out where their application was in the process, that's something that technology should be able to help us solve.

When all that information is spread across different databases and spreadsheets and paper files, it became more difficult than it needed to be. So, as we were moving through this process, we were looking at, can we reduce duplicative data entry and reduce paperwork and make it easier for our employees to access it. You know, we are having long, long times of trying to pull up our data. It was so backlogged. Can customers complete transactions online? We wanted to make the licensing process easier without compromising regulatory processes and responsibilities, so that's how we'll measure success. Because just installing this software is not the bottom line. The real measure for us will be whether we're making government easier.

Line: I imagine, too, that, you know, especially if you're having to enter the same data in different databases, there's transcriber errors that happen, too. Was that something that you guys saw?

Liz: Oh, absolutely, yes.

Line: So, was there a particular moment, or initiative, or maybe a strategic goal that made you guys realize that, hey, we really need to make this modernization a priority? Was there any kind of spark moment that caused that?

Liz: Yeah, for us, there was really a clear moment. It was when Commissioner Osborne took office 8 years ago. One of her priorities was to bring online licensing to the Department of Labor. So she believed, and rightly so, that people should be able to apply for and renew a license without having to mail in paperwork or come into our office. So that was really our catalyst. And at first, it really sounded straightforward. Okay, let's put licensing online. That was a tall order. And once we started digging into it, we realized it was not that simple. So you can't just put a nice online portal on top of decades- and decades-old back-end systems and expect it to magically work. So we had to really dig in and look at what was happening underneath, and that's when our conversation really changed from 'How do we put applications online?' to 'How do we modernize our whole licensing operation?' We also knew that Amanda, which was our primary legacy system, was not going to be renewed. So we were at a point where we just wanted something to address our needs. So, the journey has taken a lot longer than we anticipated. And we've dealt with some legacy technology and procurement requirements, and vendor issues, and some bureaucratic challenges that come with a project like this.

Connie: I was gonna add on to that, [Department of] Labor is very complex, because they have 8 or 9 different licensures from boilers, elevators, alarm lock, you know, there's a few more, but they all have a little bit of different process. And so, it was a paper process, and we're moving it to a modern, and that was a priority. We have to get each one of these right.

Liz: Correct. We have a lot of different things, and we have several different programs that interact with each other, like, for our boiler program, to inspect a boiler, you have to have a boiler license. So our programs communicated with each other. So we had to have something that would communicate back and forth. But we never abandoned this goal, so that's really what led us to Tyler.

Line: That brings up a good question, then. So, you know, obviously you did make the decision to go with Tyler's regulatory solution. As you were looking at evaluating other potential solutions, what caused or ultimately made Tyler's regulatory solution stand out from alternatives that you may have considered? Was there maybe a particular capability or vision or partnership approach that gave you confidence that Tyler was the right fit?

Liz: Well, we did look at other solutions. We had even started working with another vendor at one point. That experience with them taught us what we didn't want with a partner. Communication was very difficult, and we didn't feel like our needs were even being heard. You know, they were basically telling us, like, 'Here's the box. Now figure out how your agency fits into our box.' And that wasn't gonna work for us. Like Connie said, we have a lot of different industries. So, an elevator program doesn't operate like an alarm licensing program, and an amusement ride program doesn't operate like

a welder program. So we needed somebody that would really understand those differences.

So that's where Tyler was different. They listened, and they asked questions. And they spend time with the people who actually do this work every day. So that was very important, because our program staff, they understand our processes better than anyone. Tyler didn't come in assuming they already knew everything about how we should operate. They were willing to learn about us and learn about our business and help us figure out how technology could improve it.

And now, at the same time, they challenged us quite a bit, too, or they're still challenging us. So they would say, ‘Why do you do it that way?’ Well, sometimes our answer was, ‘Well, because we've always done it that way. Or we're required by law to do it that way.’ And those things are valuable to us, because we didn't want to spend all this time and effort to simply recreate a 30-year-old process in a brand-new system. We wanted the process to be better, and Tyler was really good about understanding that.

Line: That's great.

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So, we'll be back to my conversation with Liz and Connie in just a moment, but first, CLEAR would like to thank our podcast episode sponsor. Today's episode is sponsored by **Tyler Technologies**, CLEAR's 25-26 supporter-level premier partner. Workers thrive when regulatory processes work. Tyler Technologies empowers agencies to streamline licensing, enforcement, inspections, and payments. Learn more at TylerTech.com/regulatory. Thanks to Tyler Technologies for their support. And now, back to my conversation with Liz and Connie.

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Line: So, Connie, regulatory requirements are constantly evolving. Let's chat with you for a bit. How does Tyler design its solutions to remain flexible and adaptable as agency needs and regulations change over time? Because it could be, you know, every 6 months that something changes.

Connie: Yeah, you're right about that—it does change. But Tyler designs our solutions with flexibility in mind, so agencies can adapt as their needs and regulatory requirements evolve. We incorporate self-service capabilities and rapid deployment tools so forms and internal workflows can be updated quickly and efficiently. And by bringing these forms and transactions and workflows together in a single online portal, we're giving agencies a solution that can evolve with them while also making the experience easier for both their staff and for the people that they serve. Because the people that they serve are the ones who are going to be using [the system]. They go online, they get their license, they pay for their license.

Line: So, how do agencies set themselves up for success before implementation even begins? I'd like to hear from both of you, maybe starting with you, Liz, first. Did you guys have a roadmap in place that you set up and developed before, or was this something that Tyler helped you figure out?

Liz: Well, we had worked with a vendor. We had worked with 2 or 3 vendors, starting 8 years ago. And, like I said, we knew what we didn't want. And I had worked with Oklahoma Interactive before, so I kind of knew that they were very responsive. So, I took all the work we had done with our other vendor and kind of laid it out before them and said, ‘Hey, here's what we have. Can you help us with this?’

Line: Excellent! Connie, for your perspective, coming in from the Tyler side, how do you guys help people navigate that?

Connie: Well, I think one of the most important things is that we wanted to get the agency employees involved early. From the beginning, we worked with Liz and other leaders at the Oklahoma Department of Labor to make sure their staff had a voice, because if they didn't have a voice, they wouldn't have full buy-in. They're the ones doing the work every day. They know what works, what doesn't, and what the challenges are. Getting them involved gives us valuable insight, but it also gives them ownership of what we're building. The involvement and buy-in can make a huge difference when you get to implementation and ultimately the go-live.

Liz: Yeah, and that's been an evolving process, I think. We've all learned. Because our employees still had a bad taste in their mouths from the previous vendors, they were not real forthcoming when we started this project, because they were like, ‘oh, here's another company coming in, we know how this is gonna end.’ So it was a process to get them all involved and on board. And they are now. I mean, they are so happy with Tyler right now, I don't even know what to say. They feel like they do have ownership of it, and they feel like they're being heard, and they're confident.

Connie: Well, I think one of the pieces of that also was that we were working with Commissioner Osborne and with Liz for a long time before we started this, and before we actually were awarded the contract. And so, we had a trust built between the two of us. And that really made a huge difference for this implementation.

Liz: Right, because this hasn't been a short-term process. This has been, what, now, 2 years? Maybe more at this point.

Connie: Yeah.

Liz: You know, when we started thinking about online licensure, we were thinking, okay, we'll have this done in 4 years. You know, I'm retiring in 5 months, so I keep telling Connie I'm not even going to get to see the end of this, unless I apply for a welder's license or something [laughing].

Line: Well, what are some of the most common obstacles that agencies encounter when relying on legacy systems and how do those challenges ultimately affect agency staff, businesses, and the public they serve? So, Connie, what have you seen working with regulatory agencies on their technology solutions?

Connie: Well, I think Liz said something about this previously, but one of the things, one of the obstacles that we see is ‘that's how we've always done it.’ And so, we need to overcome that. But over time, processes get built around older technologies, and many of those processes become manual, paper-based, and very cumbersome. Modernization gives us an opportunity to step back and ask, ‘Is there a better way to do this?’ I think Liz said that exact thing a little bit ago. Instead of putting an old process online, we can look at how to make the system simpler, more efficient for agency staff, and create a better experience for businesses and for the public.

Line: And Liz, how about for you? Anything to add there? Obviously, there's challenges. People are resistant to change, and this is going to be something new, but were there other obstacles that you had to face with your teams in order to get this moving forward?

Liz: No, I think Connie's right. You know, the mindset that we've always done it this way is one of the top things I've heard. I had to literally get down to a point where I said, ‘Okay, is this a legality? Is this a statute thing, or is this just the way we've always done it?’ If it's just the way we've always done it, let's see about changing it. And we had to get to a mindset, too, with our employees, that this is a tool. Technology is a tool. It won't change everything, but it'll give you a tool to be successful. And I think once they started realizing that Tyler was listening to them and respecting their position, I think a lot of those fears went away.

Line: Connie, from your perspective, what are the key outcomes agencies should focus on when embarking on a modernization initiative? Beyond efficiency gains what broader organizational benefits can modernization help unlock?

Connie: Well, efficiency is certainly a big outcome, but I think modernization goes beyond simply making something faster. It's about making processes easier, reducing paperwork, repetitive tasks, and giving staff valuable time back. When staff aren't spending as much time managing paper and manual processes, they can focus on higher priority initiatives and other goals of the agency. At the same time, we're creating a much better experience for the people agencies serve.

Line: I want to pose this question to both of you. If you were advising an agency at the beginning of its modernization journey, what would you encourage leadership teams to think about beyond the technology itself? And let's start with you, Liz.

Liz: I would encourage them to really do their research. And to get their employees on board, and give them buy-in to the project. Because you really can't go anywhere without that, and we've learned that the hard way sometimes. But you really need your employees' buy-in. And to rethink the way you've

always done business. We've said that numerous times. Rethink how you're doing business. If it's not illegal, think about a better way to do it, and use the technology as a tool.

Line: I like the use of the tool part, and you guys have touched on that a couple times, which is great. Connie, your thoughts on that?

Connie: I think that I would encourage leadership to consider the entire experience, not just technology. How are you going to implement it? Does it make it easier, and is it more efficient for your staff and the people you serve? I also think adoption is huge. How are citizens and businesses going to know about the new platform? That's something that Liz and I have talked about, because right now, they are still going to do in-person, and we've talked about what happens when you go fully online. How are they going to encourage people to use the online service instead of trying to come into the office? You can build a great solution, but to get full value from it, we need people to know about it, understand it, and actually use it.

Line: Excellent.

Liz: That's one of the things that we talked about, too, is that we, in Oklahoma, have a lot of rural areas. So someone in rural Oklahoma, (and I go to Gotebo, Oklahoma all the time, because it seems rural to me), they shouldn't have to drive into our office to get a license. They should be able to use their internet and go online to get their license, and to do the whole process that way. And I think once we get people in that mindset, that will help a lot. I mean, you're still going to have people that are going to want to come into the office, because that's just their mindset, but it is going to be a process to get a new mindset that you can do all this online.

Line: Yes, definitely. You know, we've certainly been learning that over the last few years about how access to things from our phone or from a computer, without even actually having to talk to somebody on the phone sometimes makes things a lot easier. And as we continue to adopt those things, I think that's going to make things a lot more efficient for both regulatory as well as the consumers that are needing to use it. This has been an excellent opportunity to chat with you guys. It was great to hear about these initiatives and how technology modernization can help agencies better serve their constituents. So again, thank you to Tyler Technology for being CLEAR's 2025-2026 premier partner, and thank you, Liz and Connie, for speaking with us today.

Connie: Thank you.

Liz: Thank you.

Line: Absolutely, and it has been a pleasure. And we'd love to continue this conversation with our members. Here are some of the questions for our listeners to think about. What has been the biggest obstacle your organization has faced in modernizing its technology, and what lessons have you learned from that experience? When you think about a successful technology modernization project, what

outcomes matter most to your organization? Improved efficiency, better service to the public, stronger regulatory oversight, staff satisfaction, or something else, and why? We greatly appreciate and thank our members for your feedback. These questions will be posted on our [CLEAR Regulatory Network](#) for member discussion. If you haven't already joined the CLEAR Regulatory Network, we invite and encourage you to join and take part in the online discussions.

I also want to thank our listeners for tuning in for this episode. We'll be back with another episode of Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation very soon. And if you're new to the CLEAR podcast, please subscribe to us. You can find us on Podbean or any of your favorite podcast services. If you've enjoyed this podcast episode, please leave a rating or comment in the app. Those reviews help us to improve our ranking and make it easier for new listeners to find us. Feel free to visit our website at www.clearhq.org for additional resources and a calendar of upcoming programs and events. Finally, I'd like to thank our CLEAR staff, specifically Stephanie Thompson. She is our content coordinator and editor for this program. Once again, I'm Line Dempsey, and I hope to be speaking to you again very soon.

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