

An aerial photograph of a brick-paved plaza. The bricks are laid in a herringbone pattern. In the upper right, a group of people, including a woman with a stroller and a child, are gathered. In the center, three children are walking. In the lower left, a man in a dark suit is walking away from the camera, and a small child in a white shirt is walking towards him. The overall scene is a busy public space.

Leadership in Customer Service: Creating Shared Responsibility for Better Outcomes

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Contents

Introduction	05
Four enabling practices for leadership in customer service	09
Practice 1: "Better service starts with better understanding."	15
Practice 2: "Engage. Listen. Respond."	25
Practice 3: "Harness all available resources."	35
Practice 4: "Be transparent. Be accountable. Ask for and act on feedback."	47
Conclusion	58
Case Studies	60
Country Reports	86



Introduction

For the last eight years, Accenture has conducted research in more than 20 countries to help government organizations better understand how they can excel at serving their customers and citizens. In building up a strong body of evidence from around the world, we have found that organizations that achieve high performance through customer service have four critical elements in place:

- They are citizen-centric; that is, they organize their services and information around their citizens' needs and circumstances.
- They use a variety of channels to provide information and services to people and strive for seamless coordination between these channels.
- They work together at the local, regional and national levels to provide integrated services.
- They actively reach out to their customers; working to ensure that people are well informed about the services they offer so that customers can use their services easily, and understand what is expected of them in return.

Accenture asserted that governments that embraced the above elements would be well on the way to providing greater value for their stakeholders.

In our previous research, we also argued that the next stage of leadership in customer service would be defined by services that build an implicit trust between citizens and their government. We saw this happening through a "virtuous circle," in which citizens who perceive that their governments are providing better value public services develop greater trust in them. This trust helps to build a more connected populace, whose true needs inform government policy. When the government develops policies that respond to people's needs, it is able to improve services further, which in turn strengthens the relationship of trust.

Although many public service organizations have been striving to put the above four elements in place and build trust through better services, our research shows that in many countries, citizens are still far from satisfied that government services are helping to

improve the quality of their lives. Accenture's 2008 survey of 8,600 citizens (see "Our methodology in brief") revealed that in only three countries—Canada, Singapore and Ireland—did more than 50 percent of respondents rate their government as "doing a good job in delivering a better quality of life for themselves and their families" (see Figure 1). We also discovered that for governments in many countries, gaining people's trust in their ability to make genuine improvements to the quality of life and to cope effectively with 21st century challenges—such as social inequality, mass migration and national security—remains an elusive goal.

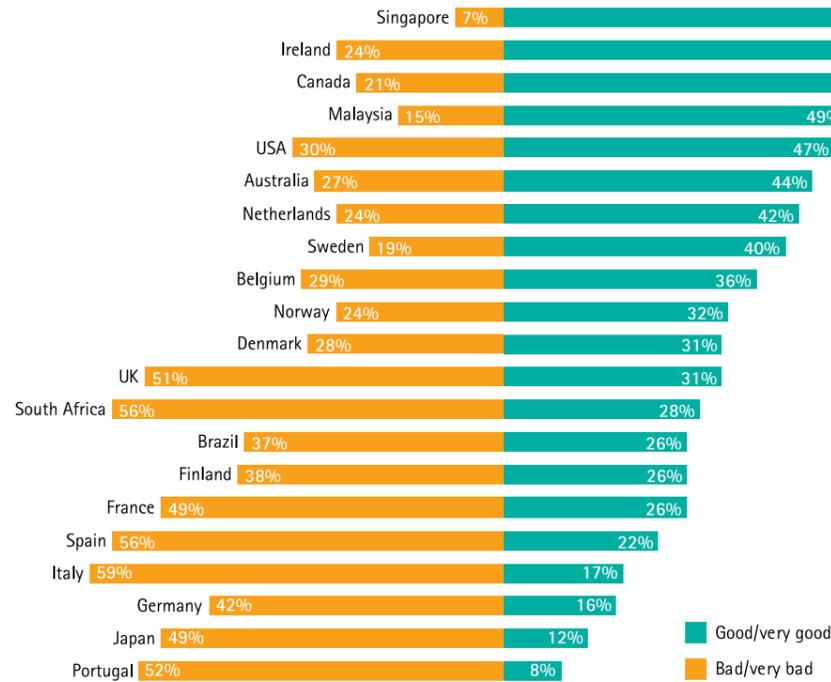


Figure 1. How good do you think your government is at delivering a better quality of life for you and your family?

In our *Leadership in Customer Service* research this year, we identified a new imperative for governments to move beyond a focus on the quality of the service transaction to develop a new kind of relationship with citizens. This relationship should foster deeper trust, improve the relevance and transparency of government decision making, service design and delivery, and transform the relationship between public services and customers/citizens from one of dependency to one of shared responsibility.

We believe that public value increases through the joint efforts of public service organizations, nonprofits, community groups, private businesses and citizens. We believe that this is the most effective way of achieving complex social outcomes that address the individual's needs holistically, alongside the needs of society in general.

People are clearly asking for this greater involvement. The findings from the first phase of Accenture's ongoing *Global Cities Forum* research, which we conducted along with the *Leadership in Customer Service* research and which

involved a deliberative dialog with panels of 60 to 80 citizens in eight world cities, showed that people view government as an important contributor toward improved social conditions for themselves and their families. However, they want to have a bigger say in how governments act to make their lives better. Derived from the common concerns and aspirations of *Global Cities Forum* participants, Accenture formulated what we believe can be a model for a more active and trust-based relationship between people and their governments. This relationship would be built on four components:

- A greater focus on improving social and economic outcomes
- Services that meet individual needs while ensuring equality and fairness
- A stronger emphasis on public engagement
- Increased government accountability

These four components provide meaning and a language with which to articulate a relationship that is about the genuine engagement of people in their governance that goes far beyond voting in elections, answering surveys or paying taxes.

High-performance governments understand the importance of these four components. While being focused on their customers is crucial to the creation of public value, they also understand that the people they serve are more than just customers. People do not simply pay taxes and receive services. They interact with the government in many ways—as service users and as taxpayers, certainly—but also as voters, as members of local communities and as citizens. Governments must serve people in all these roles: as users who want good quality service delivery, as taxpayers who want value for money, as citizens who are concerned with the common good of their local communities and their nations, and as voters who want to be knowledgeable so that they can make informed choices. As a government official commented in an interview for this study, "When governments think about 'customer service,' they need to take this wider, multipurpose relationship into account. There is a tendency to focus on service delivery, whereas that is only one area of contact between citizens and government."

To address and accommodate this constellation of identities, demands and expectations as effectively as possible, some government organizations are moving beyond traditional approaches and putting in place mechanisms that allow people—in all their guises—to work actively with government in designing and delivering services that improve quality of life in the community. They know that those who pay for and use public services are often best placed to understand and overcome the challenges involved in providing greater accessibility, wider choices and higher-quality services.

As we trace the evolution of leadership in customer service (Figure 2), we see how governments took initial, tentative steps by publishing information online in the late 1990s. They increased their efforts in the early years of the present century, moving more individualized services and service transactions online. They have upped their efforts again in recent years, this time expanding their perspective to fulfill their aim to provide truly citizen-centric, integrated, one-stop services as well as to build citizens' trust in

governments through better service delivery and content.

In the next five to ten years, we believe that the focus will be on a "rebalancing" of service provision, with traditional service providers and other stakeholders sharing responsibility more broadly by working together in new, "co-productive" relationships to improve public value. This means that citizens and service users contribute their time, skills and ideas to improve social conditions for themselves and their communities, for example, by acting as student mentors, as members of community safety associations, or even simply in taking steps to prevent ill health. The new relationship will require the government to let go more, while citizens and service users become more engaged and assume more responsibility. The benefits this will bring for governments, citizens and society as a whole are not always easy to quantify and do not fit neatly into current hierarchical government structures, but they are clearly there and they demand a fresh approach.

What have we learned from those organizations that are leading these changes? As we studied government organizations that are at the forefront of the changes described above, we concluded that there are four key ways of creating opportunities for true customer service transformation that can close the gap between expectations and reality, promote the virtuous circle of trust and move toward shared responsibility for better outcomes.

In this report, we examine these "enabling practices," as we have called them, and show how they can help governments move toward a more active, give-and-take relationship with their stakeholders. We demonstrate—especially through our interviews and case studies—some of the many examples of good practice with respect to each of these four enabling practices. We also present evidence to show that many organizations are either still struggling with these or are only now starting to think them through.

	Establish eGovernment	Use eGovernment	Embrace "Four Pillars of Leadership in Customer Service"	Build the trust	Share the responsibility
Goal	Number of services available online	High percentage of citizen and business uptake	Government services delivered cross-channel and cross-government for one stop/end-to-end services	Citizens trust their governments implicitly	Governments harness all available resources to improve outcomes
Era	1999–2001	2001–2005	2005–2008	2007+	2008+
Key challenges	Internet capability	Citizen outreach uptake	Cross-government collaboration Service integration	Content of services –not just delivery	Deeper, broader engagement and collaboration; Transparency and accountability
Time to implement	2–3 years	2–5 years	5+ years	7+ years	5–10 years
Financial implications	Technology cost	Investment in additional channels	Deliver more for less cost	Citizen input informs smart allocation of resources from the outset	Resources pooled to deliver shared outcomes
Service implications	Service availability	Service delivery	Service value	Service trust	Service co-production
Value proposition/ advantage	Government masters technology	Increased convenience; Decline in transaction costs	Citizen-centred perspective; Cost to serve declines/ flattens	Country effectiveness improves	Stronger relationship between government, citizens and communities

Figure 2. High-performance governments are moving toward the next stage of leadership in customer service by encouraging a relationship of shared responsibility with other stakeholders.

"What have we learned from the leaders?"



Four key enabling practices will create opportunities for true customer service transformation that closes the gap between expectations and reality.

01

Better service starts with better understanding.

Differentiate service offerings, based on customer insight and segmentation, to meet people's specific needs and improve equality of outcomes.

Governments must strive to become better informed about what the people they serve want and need, and put in place services and service delivery mechanisms that are responsive, connected and aligned to those wants and needs. Whereas in private industries, companies conduct value-based segmentation, governments need to understand their "customers" by undertaking detailed, needs-based, customer segmentation studies, recognizing that these needs will vary across different customer segments and, indeed, individual customers. Then, they must respond by targeting services—and therefore resources—appropriately, ensuring that those who have the greatest need receive the most help and those who are most able to help themselves have the opportunities and means to do so. These actions will enable governments to tackle the difficult balance between the desirability of offering people choices and personalized services and the necessity of achieving more equal and universal social outcomes cost-effectively.

02

Engage. Listen. Respond.

Actively engage citizens, service users and other stakeholders in defining outcomes and designing services.

People want a greater say on issues that matter to them. They want a chance to put their ideas and opinions forward and to know that their government is listening and responding. They want to play a part in deciding, or at least influencing, government priorities and help plan and design services that meet their specific needs and preferences. Governments must respond to these demands by actively engaging citizens, customers and other stakeholders to better understand their wants and needs. This is critical if governments truly intend to provide an excellent customer experience and build services that are customer-centric and outcomes-focused.

Governments must also explore new means of reaching out to educate and inform citizens of their rights and obligations, as well as encourage them to participate in decision making. Only with these fundamentals in place can they begin to build a more positive trust-based relationship, through which people's real needs are met. Although many governments have been slow off the mark, we have also found evidence that some governments are responding and finding new ways—with their citizens, community groups, businesses and other stakeholders—to deliberate upon and jointly develop policies and services to address pressing social, economic and community issues as well as promote greater levels of public participation.

03

Harness all available resources.

Use the experience and resources available across government, non-profits, community groups, private businesses and individual citizens to achieve complex, cross-cutting outcomes.

Government organizations that are leaders in customer service are taking a "joined-up" approach and connecting people to a network of service providers to address their whole-life needs and improve outcomes. This approach requires good coordination, collaboration and the integration of policies, program design and service delivery—not just across government departments, but also across different sectors and types of organization. The needs of the people themselves—rather than those of policy makers and public managers—will then drive government activities.

Such a connected approach, however, demands a great deal, including a willingness to search for innovative solutions to people's problems, and to trust that collaboration will pay off. While many early collaborative efforts focused on creating common infrastructures, sharing data and providing a range of services through a single provider, more recently we have started to see examples of deeper collaboration. High-performance governments are finding ways to work together to develop joint visions and strategic plans that reflect shared goals in addressing national and local priorities. They are trying to establish joint accountability and governance frameworks, integrate their processes, procedures and information systems, manage budgets and assets in pursuit of common goals and deploy their staff more effectively across a range of services. Non-profits and community groups are more often taking the lead in addressing local social problems, and communities and citizens, with government support, are deciding their own local priorities and the best way to tackle the issues before them.

04

Be transparent. Be accountable. Ask for and act on feedback.

Focus on improving transparency, accessibility of information and the means for people to address government directly, so that customers can hold governments accountable for the quality of services delivered.

If they are to build trust and encourage co-production, governments need to become more transparent and accountable. They need to inform people about their policies, programs and services actively and regularly. Doing so—as some forward-thinking government organizations that have allowed citizens extensive access to information and systems are discovering—actually enhances the economic and social value of this information. It enhances the value by helping citizens make better decisions and choices, and enabling them to search for services that match their specific interests and needs. Furthermore, governments are being pressed to provide greater visibility and give customers more control of the customer-service process; for example, by allowing service requests to be tracked online. People also want the government to report more regularly performance data on outcomes—the actual results that show how quality of life is improving—so that they can compare their public services with those in other areas and see how the quality of services is changing over time.

Involving citizens in establishing, implementing and evaluating measures of performance can only help to foster a broader awareness and sense of ownership among citizens, and a willingness to act as co-producers. The flip side of involving citizens in this way, of course, is that governments have to make it possible for people to voice their concerns and complaints. It is the ability to effectively identify and resolve issues—when they arise—that has the most significant impact on customers' perception of services and trust in government. Easily accessible and transparent ways for citizens to raise and follow up on complaints are therefore vital, and governments must also demonstrate that they are ready to learn from these complaints and identify and resolve systemic issues. Our research has uncovered some excellent examples of governments doing this well, but has also revealed that there is widespread complacency and a lack of focus on this crucial aspect of customer service.

In 2008, we have observed that governments are entering a new phase on their journey toward leadership in customer service. To succeed in the next phase, governments must actively involve citizens and other stakeholders in identifying priorities, influencing decision making, shaping policies, designing services, holding governments to account for the results achieved and even jointly contributing to service delivery. By doing so, governments will be better placed to deliver improved services to customers and social outcomes that address people's often complex needs, thereby building genuine trust among their citizens.

In the next section of the report, we explore each of the four enabling practices in more detail. We present insights from our research and examples of the ways in which leading government organizations are implementing these practices. We also provide Accenture's recommendations for governments that want to move to the next stage of leadership in customer service. These recommendations not only come from our own analysis of the feedback from citizens and the in-depth discussions we held with senior government executives from more than 40 different organizations in 16 countries, but also from the insights Accenture brings from its own experience in working with government clients around the world.

We have also highlighted six case studies showing how various pioneering organizations have overcome the challenges inherent in implementing the enabling practices, thereby achieving higher levels of service excellence and improving outcomes for citizens and users. Finally, as in previous years, we conclude the report with individual country summaries. These country summaries provide an overview of the state of customer service and people's perceptions of their government in each of the 21 countries we surveyed.



Our methodology in brief

This year, our *Leadership in Customer Service* research has taken a qualitative approach, focusing on exploring real-life examples of leading practices from organizations around the world.

To this end, we conducted more than 40 interviews with senior government officials across many countries in Europe, North America and Asia. Our goal was to understand more about what makes government organizations leaders in customer service. We also set out to investigate in more detail some of the other elements that drive people's satisfaction and trust in governments' ability to achieve their desired outcomes. These include: governments' strategies and initiatives to improve collaboration with other sectors; the actions governments take to consult and engage with citizens and service users; their approaches to providing greater transparency and accountability for quality of service and performance; and the mechanisms they provide for public recourse.

We continued with the background research and citizen survey components of our traditional research approach this year as well. We undertook in-depth secondary research in the 21 countries included in last year's study and surveyed 8,600 citizens in each of these countries to understand people's perceptions of government service delivery as well as the extent of citizens' participation in society.

Countries studied

- Australia
- Belgium
- Brazil
- Canada
- Denmark
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Ireland
- Italy
- Japan
- Malaysia
- The Netherlands
- Norway
- Portugal
- Singapore
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sweden
- United Kingdom
- United States

In addition, this year we have conducted more comprehensive secondary research and in-depth interviews to compile six case studies. This research has provided us with deeper insights into the adoption of the enabling practices.

Case studies

- Central Provident Fund Board (Singapore)
- Communities for Children (Australia)
- Department for Work and Pensions (United Kingdom)
- Kent County Council (United Kingdom)
- New York City Government (United States)
- ServiceOntario (Canada)

These different research components have helped us understand the current status of customer service initiatives around the world and the leading practices that will help governments move to the next level—creating a shared responsibility for outcome achievement and a closer relationship between citizens/customers and their government. We have used the findings to inform our views on the key enabling practices that will help organizations move toward high performance through improved customer service and delivery.



"How do I know services will meet my particular needs?"

01

Better service starts with better understanding.

Differentiate service offerings based on customer insight and segmentation, to meet people's specific needs and improve equality of outcomes.

In last year's *Leadership in Customer Service* study, we stressed the importance for government service providers of "knowing your customer" to develop a detailed understanding of individual customers' various needs at different times in their lives. This understanding is vital to delivering services that meet those needs via the most appropriate channels.

This year, we probed this important topic further, because offering such differentiated services is not only key to improving customer satisfaction and securing people's trust, but also is the only way to improve equality of outcomes for citizens.

Most service providers recognize that people have diverse needs: there are significant differences between people when it comes to socio-economic backgrounds, educational levels, physical abilities and language capabilities. To reach the same outcomes, people need different amounts and types of help from government, and at different times. To maximize outcomes for citizens while containing costs, government should be targeting resources at people who most

need them, rather than offering an indiscriminate, "one-size-fits-all" service to everyone.

We asked our *Leadership in Customer Service* survey respondents to make a straight trade off between whether they thought their government should focus its efforts more on providing fair and equal access to government services, or providing citizens with choice and services tailored to meet individual needs. Understandably, they seemed to struggle with this, and in most countries, respondents were quite evenly split between those who favored fair and equal access, and those who wanted more choice, although in most countries they leaned more toward fairness and equality (Figure 3). Citizens in most countries were likely to favor a greater emphasis—even if only slightly—on fair and equal access. The Japanese and Danish were the exceptions, with the majority in those countries favoring choice and flexibility. Citizens seem to be telling us that they not only want their government to improve fairness and equality of outcomes, but also want differentiated services depending on their individual needs.

When we asked citizens to rate their government's performance on providing equal access and tailored services (Figure 4), people in every country rated their respective governments higher on providing equal access. Governments were generally rated rather poorly on tailoring services to meet individual needs, and most were rated even lower on targeting resources to people who need them.

Figure 5 shows the degree of preference for choice and tailored services against citizens' views on how well their government is delivering those. It shows that in Japan and Denmark, where most people consider choice and tailored services important, the government is not generally considered to be offering it; whereas in Singapore, Malaysia and Canada, citizens are more satisfied with the level of choice and tailoring offered by their governments, but are actually more concerned with equality of access.

The results from the survey are also reflected in the findings from Accenture's *Global Cities Forum* events. People everywhere told us that they want their government to strive toward fairness and

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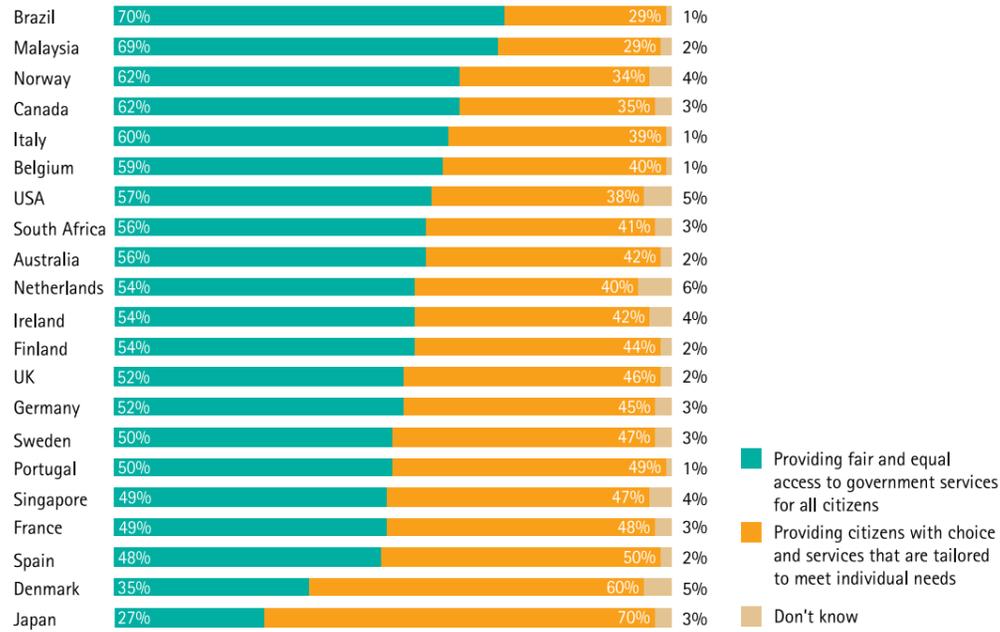


Figure 3. Which of these you think the government should focus its efforts on?

equality of outcomes. They are in favor of the government targeting resources to assist people in need. However, at the same time, they also want choice, flexibility and personalized services that meet their own individual needs. The difficulty is that offering choice can exacerbate socio-economic disparities, as the more affluent and well educated are often better placed to exercise choice, while those at a relative disadvantage in terms of their personal circumstances tend to be left behind.

Government's role is to find an acceptable balance between the principles of equality and fairness on the one hand, and choice and flexibility of service delivery on the other, while making clear what trade offs may be necessary. Improving equality of outcomes requires more than just providing equal access to services. It requires the government to adapt services according to customers' needs and circumstances and to offer flexibility and choice to suit individual preferences as far as possible.

To achieve this difficult balance, public service providers should undertake

detailed customer segmentation studies to understand their customer base better—their particular needs and preferences, rather than just broad demographic groupings—and use this understanding to inform all aspects of their services, including resource allocation, service design, channel strategy, and communications and engagement strategies.

One organization that is doing just that is the Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services in the province of British Columbia, Canada. For example, the ministry, in partnership with the Ministry of Attorney General, recently conducted extensive, needs-based segmentation in its large and growing new immigrant population, to understand better and respond to their range of needs. Then it worked extensively with immigrant bodies and community groups to develop the WelcomeBC portal (welcomebc.ca). This portal is organized by broad customer segment (temporary workers, international students, and so on) and according to specific needs (for instance, ChooseBC; Come to BC; Settle in BC; Enjoy BC; Diversity in BC; and

Regions in BC) and offers services in several languages.

Another interesting example is the region of Wallonia in Belgium. It has just completed a project called Personnalisation des Publics-Cible or "getting to know the target public." As part of this project, it used official socio-demographic statistics on the citizens of Wallonia and data on its stakeholders in the public, private and non-profit sectors to group its customers into 23 different segments. Then, for each of these segments, it created a one page customer profile and brought these profiles to life by giving each one a name, a photograph and a brief description of the person's circumstances. The profile also describes the person's attitude toward technology and outlines the relationship he/she has with the public administration and the government services he/she relies on.

The Wallonian customer profiles include individual citizens and families, public-sector workers, employees of non-governmental organizations and heads of corporations and small/medium companies, all of whom are

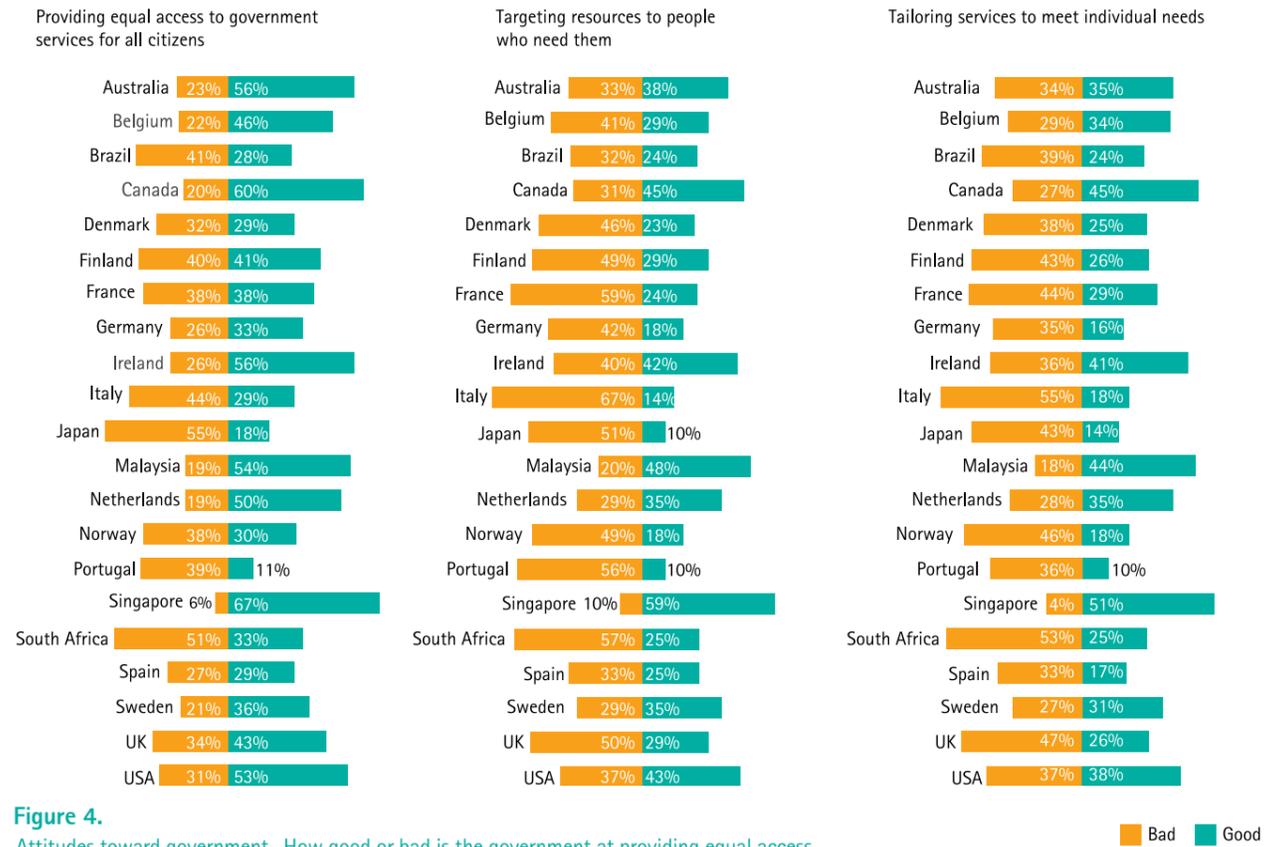


Figure 4. Attitudes toward government—How good or bad is the government at providing equal access, targeting resources and tailoring services?

important and distinct users of public services. The profiles are being disseminated to public administrations throughout Wallonia and should be used to inform their communications and channel strategies, as well as the design of websites, forms and business processes—indeed, their entire range of services—based on a far more concrete view of who their users are. The challenge will lie in finding the best way to use these profiles to help ensure the specific needs of this diverse group of stakeholders are addressed.

Target services at those with the greatest need or at higher risk

Importantly, customer insight and segmentation can be used to target greater customer service resources at those most in need, or most at risk, such as those at risk of under-claiming on their benefit entitlement, or of non-compliance with regulations, or of being socially excluded. Customer segmentation also allows governments to consider adopting a lighter-touch, self-service model—using electronic channels, for instance—for people whom

they have identified as being less needy or less at risk. The cost savings can then be used to maintain a more supportive customer service model—mainly face-to-face and phone contact—for those with greater needs.

In some areas of public service, identifying at-risk groups is about understanding who the most vulnerable customers are. For example, elderly people on low incomes who live alone and do not claim benefits to which they are entitled may be at a greater risk when they fall ill or cannot afford adequate heating or food. Children most at risk of future involvement in crime, drug abuse or teenage pregnancy might be identified by using social and economic indicators, allowing government agencies to target them for additional support. The challenge inherent in identifying such individuals and groups is how to collect relevant data and use it to evaluate levels of need accurately and without risking making wrong assumptions about people.

The Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) provides an example of an

organization that is taking great care to identify potentially at-risk individuals and offer a differentiated level of customer service to them. The organization's leadership was prompted to take this approach when it became apparent that there was a small number of veterans for whom normal services did not meet their unique needs. The DVA has since worked on identifying a sub-group of clients that were thought to be most vulnerable or at risk. The department established a small Client Liaison Unit to actively manage this group and offer them a differentiated service. In particular, this involves ensuring they have a single point of contact (a named individual) for all their dealings with the department, who acts as a liaison or "pathfinder," and helps to ensure that their claims are directed to the correct function(s), handled expeditiously and are not allowed to "fall through the net." However, the actual decisions on the claims made by this high-risk group are made independently, by the relevant DVA function, ensuring fairness of outcome, while also protecting the client-liaison relationship.

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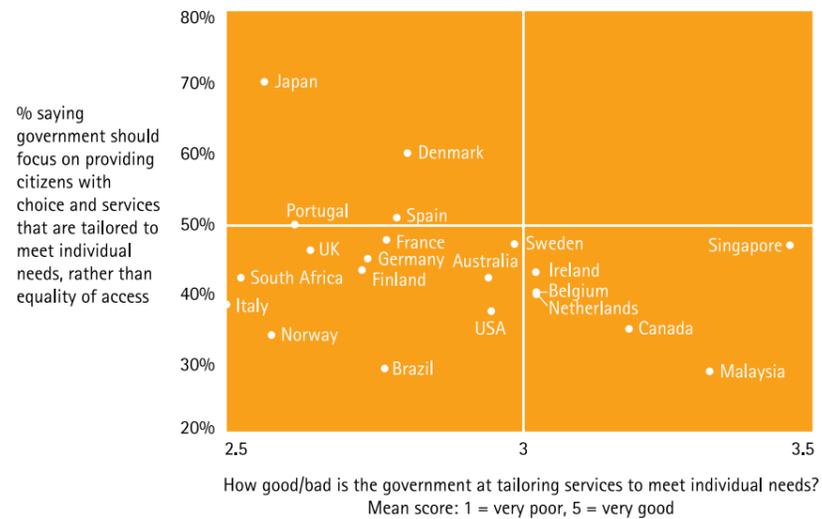


Figure 5. Choice and tailoring of services: citizens' preferences versus their rating of government performance

Client Liaison Unit staff have been given specialized training in handling vulnerable people and the unit has high-level executive support, including ring-fenced funding and regular meetings with the executive.

Deputy president of the Repatriation Commission, DVA, Ed Killesteyn, told us, "The Client Liaison Unit was set up to actively manage that group of people to provide tailored support for veterans who were reaching the point where the normal business wasn't working for them." The high-risk customer segment was initially identified through the instincts of local DVA representatives looking at various issues, such as mental health, complex physical health conditions, family circumstances and stability of accommodation. However, now the DVA is working on formalizing the risk-assessment processes to apply it to the entire customer base, with a view to embedding the differentiated service for all those who may be considered high risk. The challenges include identifying the correct risk indicators and setting thresholds on those indicators

appropriately to ensure the most at-risk people are identified, while creating a segment that has a realistically manageable size. It is also important to ensure that any differentiated service is building off an efficient and effective standard level of service.

As Killesteyn explained, "From an efficiency point of view, you need to be able to ensure that the majority of clients get a standard level of service, but there is a small group that needs something different. ... We need to build a culture that is not only about efficient transactional processing of clients common core services, but which also says, 'Look, here is an individual who needs something different.'"

In other areas of public service, targeting at-risk groups is more about offering a lighter-touch, more expedient services for those who tend to be compliant, while identifying and providing extra support or controls for those who are unlikely to comply with regulations or obligations. Tax authorities, for example, are moving toward greater self-service and targeting scarce and costly auditing

resources at those with exceptions or those at highest risk of non-compliance. The Finnish tax agency is currently looking at ways in which it can improve its risk analysis so that it can readily identify those companies most at risk of attempted tax evasion or non-compliance, and who need to be targeted for a desk audit by tax officers. Improved risk analysis will allow a greater percentage of companies to move to automatic self-filing without the need for an audit. It will also help to differentiate between companies that may only require a light-touch inspection and those that may require a top-to-bottom audit.

In Ireland, the Irish Revenue Agency is considering something similar. It already assesses the risk profile of its business customers and is now debating whether to share that risk rating with individual business customers, allowing them to self-audit and commit to managing down their own risk rating by keeping good quality accounts and tax filings.

The Dutch Tax and Customs Administration has introduced a fresh

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Ed Killesteyn
Deputy President, Repatriation Commission,
The Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs

approach. Along with segmenting according to risk and by size and type of taxpayer, it has divided its individual taxpayer customers into a number of "attitudinal" categories. The first category includes those people (around 35 percent) who want help with filing their tax returns and are not interested in details. They can be helped very readily by making the filing process easy for them. Another category includes those who are willing to pay their taxes but want to know why and want to ensure they are not paying too much. Other categories include those who are less willing to deal with the government or are less likely to comply with their obligations. This approach will allow the organization to shape its services and channel strategy around customers' preferences.

Adapt channel strategies, marketing and communications to suit needs and preferences

Over the years, we have highlighted ways in which governments have been adapting their channel strategies to encourage greater use of the more

cost-effective, low-touch or self-service channels, while ensuring services remain accessible to all groups, even the potentially hard-to-reach ones. For instance, to make online self-service accessible to those without personal Internet access, governments have provided public terminals in front-end offices, libraries and mobile units; sometimes with government officers available to assist users. The mobile ambassadors (m-ambassadors) of the Central Provident Fund Board in Singapore—highlighted as an innovation in last year's report—are a good example of an organization finding a way to help ensure that elderly or house-bound people can access online services, by taking the service to people's homes and helping them use it.

Many government organizations are still focusing on basic website accessibility, especially to ensure that people with disabilities or special needs can access online services. In several countries, multi-lingual information provision is another elementary, but increasingly important requirement. However, governments should be moving beyond these basic requirements to consider

how they can adapt their channel strategies to suit the particular preferences of their different customer segments and increase uptake. For example, the Irish central government has been focusing on developing the mobile phone channel due to the overwhelming preference for this mode of communication on the part of farmers—an important customer group for many agencies. In the United Kingdom, while the Pensions Service is striving to migrate most of its customer interactions to one-stop contact centers (integrating mail, Web and phone channels), it is also working with local authorities to offer face-to-face services via local offices or home visits for its most vulnerable customers (see Department for Work and Pensions case study).

Robust customer insight and segmentation should also be used to inform communications strategies, so that governments' messages are effectively targeted to reach everyone who needs to know about their services. Given the expense of mass media advertising and direct marketing campaigns, government agencies have

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to use these well and find intelligent ways to get their messages across to their target audiences by selecting vehicles, and a content and style that will capture their customers' attention.

In Ireland, the Irish Revenue Agency—its multi-channel strategy now in place—has plans to conduct a detailed segmentation of its customer base of 2.2 million. According to Norman Gillanders, assistant secretary, Irish Revenue Agency, the aim is to “tailor our contact to the right people, taking the right message to the right group of taxpayers, encouraging them to use the appropriate channel to contact us.” This is seen as critically important, because Ireland has a complex system of tax credits and citizens need to know their entitlements and the process to claim them. The current perception is that because citizens find it hard to understand the system, many are not claiming the tax credits to which they are entitled. The Irish Revenue Agency recognizes that its current method of marketing the online service—indiscriminately through mass media—is neither efficient nor effective.

The Irish Revenue Agency is now looking for a better approach. Gillanders explained, “One of the ideas that we have is to try to use the analytics and segmentation to market particular credits to people who have a high probability of being entitled to them.” Once identified, these groups of people would also receive special customer care arrangements to encourage their take up of tax credits. Work has already begun, targeting some of the higher-value tax credits, such as rent credit, first. It is anticipated that this targeted approach will be more effective, driving up numbers of claims among those who are eligible, as well as being more cost-effective in terms of Revenue's marketing budget.”

Gillanders added: “We can put together the profile of the people who are already claiming rent credit, and we can identify people with those traits and through a very tailored and targeted marketing campaign we can say, ‘We think you are entitled to rent credit. Why don't you fill in this simple form and Norman is

waiting at the end of the special 1890 line to answer your queries.”

Personalize the customer experience

Today's sophisticated citizens are increasingly demanding that government agencies offer them a customized, personalized service. They expect government agencies to use the kinds of customer relationship management (CRM) tools now commonplace in the private sector to collect, store and use their personal data to offer them services based on their unique individual circumstances. Governments are responding to this need in a variety of ways. One of the most basic ways in which organizations can personalize their interactions with customers is by having access to their client history, so that the customer service representatives can demonstrate an understanding of the customer's circumstances. Governments can also use customer information to proactively offer services that address people's specific needs or circumstances.

For example, ever since the Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board in Singapore implemented its new CRM system, it has collected profile information on its customers, which it now uses to send personalized messages to them each time they log in to the CPF website, or in response to key events. For example, it sends every customer a message through the short message service (SMS) when their employer has paid their monthly contribution to the CPF account. As Hock Keong Ng, CPF Board's director of Customer Relations said, “We are getting more proactive in serving the customers. Instead of them coming onto the website to see if the contribution has arrived, now we push that information to them.”

Customers also receive personalized messages from the CPF portal if, for example, their balance is running low for their housing installments. “We are able to trigger six months before the account turns zero and tell them that ‘Hey, there's a possibility that your account will not be able to meet your housing installment.’ We now have a complete view of the

customer in the sense that we know the customer and how he has been interacting with us, what he has been asking. ... And we don't need the customer to repeat whatever he has done before, because any previous interaction with us is captured in the system.” This not only saves the customer and the customer service officer time and effort, but also helps ensure that people get a more complete and tailored service.

Another way governments can provide a tailored customer experience is by creating a personalized portal, grouping together the services that a citizen uses and the information that the public service holds on that person in one customized web page. For example, at the time of writing, the Danish government was preparing for the October launch of a new version of the Borger.dk citizens portal, which would include Min Side (“My Site”), a personalized access point to citizens' own publicly held data, combined with individually tailored information and online services.

The Dutch government has also created a “My Page” personal Internet page, which is accessible to citizens who have a digital signature. The page allows citizens to see a consolidated view of their government interactions and check the accuracy of information that the government holds about them. Early feedback from user panels suggested that although citizens liked being able to see what information the government held on them, at the same time many were alarmed at how much information the government had collected. In light of this concern, the government is considering the original emphasis on consolidated personal information and refocusing the My Page idea toward presenting services organized around life events and tailoring services around customers' needs. Ideally, the government would like to link the services related to life events with the information it already knows about an individual, to avoid repeated requests for personal information. Therefore, for instance, a person who has recently married would automatically have the

“(Our challenge is) to tailor our contact to the right people, taking the right message to the right group of taxpayers, encouraging them to use the appropriate channel to contact us.”

Norman Gillanders
Assistant Secretary, Irish Revenue Agency,
Ireland

services available to him/her updated and presented on his/her revised page. According to our interviewees from the Dutch government, the challenge is to build citizens' trust in government holding, sharing and using their personal information for this purpose.

Build a single view of the customer across multiple agencies

Several of the governments we looked at are pursuing the objective of one-time-only data provision to achieve a single view of the customer, reduce the administrative burden on citizens and businesses, and offer services to citizens without them having to apply. This clearly improves the customer experience by eliminating the need to navigate multiple agencies or provide personal details and proofs of eligibility to different places. Furthermore, this approach helps ensure fair and equal access to services, as people's ability to benefit from entitlements does not depend on their own knowledge of the benefits available, or on their capacity to complete applications.

Belgium has introduced this approach extremely successfully in the area of social security. The Belgian Crossroads Bank for Social Security enables a one-time collection of personal data and sharing between nominated authorities to guarantee automated provision of all services for which the applicant is eligible. For example, people applying for the main disability benefit will be notified that their information will be shared with a list of other agencies (they can opt out if they wish to), so that they will automatically receive the 20 or so related benefits, such as a free bus pass, a car parking permit and a discounted telephone tariff.

The Crossroads Bank has a central reference directory, which records, for every Belgian citizen, which of the approximately 3,000 agencies and service providers in the network has a file on them and what kind of information is held there. Structured messaging is used to exchange data between applications run by institutions that hold data on an individual and other institutions that require that data. Access to data is strictly controlled by an independent committee, designated by parliament. This

committee decides which agency can get what kind of information, about what kinds of people, and for what purposes. Agencies must also meet certain standards concerning updating information and correcting any mistakes.

The system does not go as far as to combine data centrally, attempt to identify citizens with particular risks, or try to assume particular eligibility criteria from related data points. This is because it was found, while the system was being piloted, that the potential for error was too high. Some individual agencies may combine data to identify eligible or at-risk individuals, but will evaluate this manually, rather than in an automated way.

Frank Robben, administrator general of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security described the work in this way: “We are a kind of service integrator. We put together data from several places, in order to create integrated services. The customer gets an integrated service; he gets all his derived benefits automatically, based on one contact, even if these benefits are being delivered by several institutions.”

The Crossroads Bank model has been so successful that it is currently being reproduced for the Dutch health sector (linking hospitals, general practitioners, sickness funds, pharmacies, and so on) and is also being considered for other sectors including tax. It has been recognized internationally, receiving a United Nations Public Service Award for e-government in 2006, and the model is being emulated in other countries around the world.

However, this is not the only model being used to achieve an integrated view of the customer. The province of British Columbia in Canada, for example, is looking at moving toward a single-point of information provision for social-sector applications, using an integrated case management system to provide a single view of the customer. In addition, work is already under way to develop common eligibility criteria for disability benefits and assessments across its whole range of programs, so that the questions need only be asked once, and eligibility information then shared across agencies.

The Finnish government is creating a personalized digital citizen's account, or "Service Account." The Service Account will allow citizens and companies to follow the progress of their cases and will also serve as a channel for electronic communication between the authority and the citizen. The aim is to gather in one place all relevant information that already exists in the different administrative systems, so that citizens only need to provide information that is not yet held on them. The Service Account aims at significantly improving communication between administration and citizens. A major, government-wide IT project, it is expected to be launched in 2009.

Our research has revealed many ways in which government organizations are using customer insight to offer differentiated services to distinct groups of customers, or services that are tailored to individual customers' circumstances, needs or preferences. Leaders in customer services are using techniques like needs-based segmentation to identify and target resources at those customers in greatest

need, and encourage greater self-reliance and self-access where appropriate. Most government organizations, however, could do more to truly understand their customers, adapt their services according to need and thereby become more customer-centric, while improving equality of outcomes for all.

Recommendations

- **Recognize that customers, even within the same broad segments, are different** and therefore need to be served differently. Some will require more help than others to reach the same outcomes. The desire for equality and fairness does not imply monolithic service provision; rather, it can be met by services that are flexible and tailored to take into account the different circumstances and needs of individual customers. Public services must therefore differentiate, targeting more resources at those most in need, in order to achieve fairness and equality of outcomes.

- **Conduct detailed customer segmentation**, based on needs and behaviors as well as socio-demographic factors, to build a more detailed and nuanced picture of the customer base. Use this detailed customer insight to offer appropriately tailored services, inform channel strategies and target marketing and communications more effectively.

- **Organize and group services around the different customer segments and their needs**, rather than around the organization's internal structures.

People know themselves and their needs, but they do not necessarily know which service they require to address that need, or which part of government provides it. Government services should be made as intuitive and customer-centric as possible.

- **Strive toward greater self-service and 'lighter-touch' customer service** and controls (such as audits or screenings) for those who are most able to help themselves and present least risk. Move the more well-informed and low-risk customers toward electronic services, pre-populated forms, automated renewals, self-assessments and self-certification, where appropriate.

- **Target resources toward helping those with greater need or at higher risk.** Offer a more comprehensive service for these customers; for example, in-person assistance or dedicated customer liaison to individuals or customer segments identified as requiring extra help. Provide more thorough assessments and audits to those most at risk of non-compliance.

- **Use individual customer data to personalize customer interaction**, or to offer additional services based on known eligibility or appropriateness. At a minimum, the customer's contact history should be available to service representatives so that they know the individual's particular circumstances. Additionally, selected personal data provided by customers themselves or by authorized agencies can be collected, analyzed and used to proactively offer services tailored to the customer's life-stage, needs and eligibility.



"How can I make sure my opinions are heard?"

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Engage. Listen. Respond.

Actively engage citizens, service users and other stakeholders in defining outcomes and designing services

Government organizations that want to achieve high performance through customer service excellence must first develop a sound understanding of what outcomes citizens want from their government, as well as what they expect from specific services. They need to ensure that the services they are offering are the right ones to achieve the outcomes their customers expect. They also need to deliver those services in ways that take into account their customers' needs and preferences. The only way to do these things is by actively engaging citizens early on in the decision-making process and seeking their opinions on an ongoing basis.

In this year's *Leadership in Customer Service* research, we have found that citizens in most of the countries are highly critical of the extent to which their government seeks their opinions. In 15 of the 21 countries we surveyed, less than a third of respondents thought their government did a good job of seeking the opinions of its citizens (Figure 6). Citizens in South Africa, the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy were most likely to say that their government was "bad" or "very bad" at seeking their

opinions, with around 60 percent of respondents in each of those countries holding this negative view. The respondents in these countries also rated their governments low on informing citizens about policies and services, underlining a sense of disengagement with the government. The negative perceptions of citizens in the United Kingdom are particularly disappointing, as the UK government appears to have one of the most extensive citizen-engagement programs of all the countries we have studied. This result may reflect a degree of cynicism among British people about the government's efforts to reach out, or indeed may suggest that the government is not doing enough to inform citizens of how it is using the insights from its consultations with them to shape policy and services.

This widespread lack of feeling "listened to" across many countries has a significant impact on citizens' trust and confidence in their governments. According to our survey, this need to be "listened to" is the number one driver of trust in France and the United States—and it is therefore crucial that governments find ways to bridge this gap

through their interactions with citizens. Clearly, governments are not doing enough to seek their citizens' opinions and ensure people know that their views count. And even if they are seeking their citizens' views, they are not doing so publicly enough and are not "closing the loop" to ensure citizens know their views are making a difference.

People who participated in our *Global Cities Forum* research told us that they want more opportunities to be involved in the process of setting government priorities, defining desired outcomes and planning public services that help improve their quality of life. They do not accept that politicians and civil servants can shape public services simply on the basis of their own assumptions of what is best for citizens. Moreover, they are no longer content to wait until election day to make their views count. Instead, they want access to channels that will offer them the chance to engage continually with politicians and public managers, influence policy and shape public services in ways that meet their personal needs and those of their communities.

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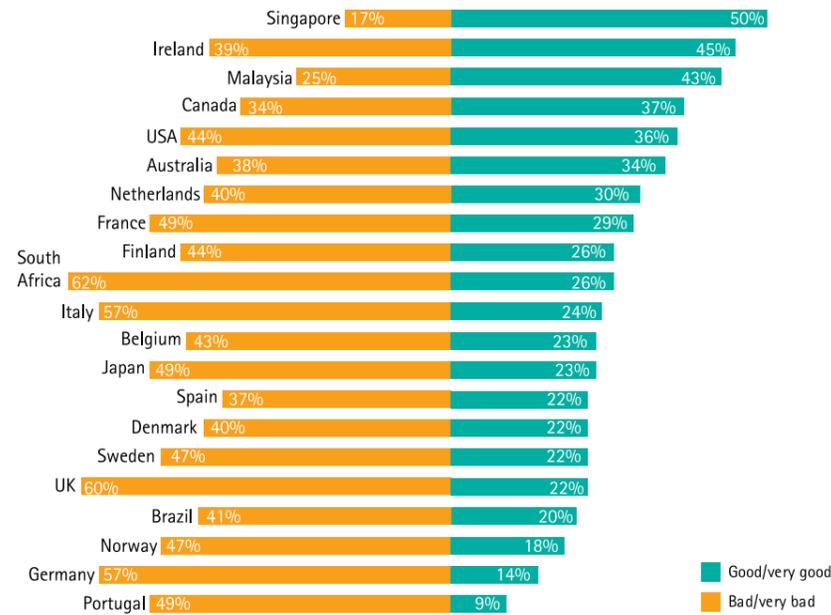


Figure 6.
How good or bad do you think your government is at seeking the opinions of its citizens?

Many of the agencies we interviewed in the course of our research told us that they engage in regular stakeholder- and user-engagement activities, and there are many examples of good practice in this area. High-performance governments are using consultation and engagement activities extensively, and for a number of different reasons including: defining the overall priorities and outcomes that they should be focusing on, providing input into the design of services, as well as educating and encouraging participation among citizens.

Engaging stakeholders to define overall priorities and desired outcomes

Governments that are leaders in customer service must ensure that they not only build world-class public services, but also that those services address the overall priorities of their citizens. This has to be the starting point; a service may be delivering an excellent customer experience but this counts for little if that service is not contributing to the outcomes that are important to its customers. Therefore, citizens need to be

engaged from the very start, when the government organization is defining its overall priorities and the outcomes that it is aiming to achieve.

We have found that forward-thinking government organizations are starting to involve citizens in setting the overall agenda and in defining priorities, and are doing so in a very proactive and visible way to ensure citizens know their views are being sought. For example, in Norway, the latest government modernization strategy, "A Strong and Efficient Public Sector," was developed partly based on input from a citizens' conference, attended by 150 people. At that event, the government asked participants for ideas on how to improve the public service and how to include citizens in its development. Similarly, Australia's new Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, convened a "2020 Summit," bringing together various sections of society to debate and develop long-term options for the nation in key areas, and invited submissions from the general public.

Governments are also consulting with a broader range of stakeholders, including

private businesses, as they determine their future priorities. The governor of the U.S. state of Georgia brought together a team of business owners and private sector chief executives, later known as the "Commission for a New Georgia," which helped set Georgia's vision of becoming the best-managed state in the United States, and identified the priority action areas to enable the state to reach its goal. The leadership is now looking at ways to involve its citizens more closely in setting the priorities and direction for the state.

Governments in most countries conduct open public consultations on an ad-hoc basis to allow citizens to voice their opinions on a specific issue or proposed change in policy or legislation. The Japanese government is among those trying to encourage greater citizen engagement in shaping services to meet their needs. The government holds frequent public consultations through its Public Comments System, for example, when legislation is being changed or when new or important issues arise. Information on the topic is published, the consultation advertised (for example, on posters), and citizens have 30 days to

comment, either in writing or online. Again, the proportion of comments from the general public is still limited, compared to those from organizations. However, the number of online submissions is increasing.

Another way of engaging with citizens and communities in a highly proactive and visible manner is by going out into the community and holding meetings with local people. Citizens can then meet politicians or public managers in person, hear what their priorities, plans and challenges are, and, most crucially, ask questions and raise issues with people who have the power to do something about them. Leading government organizations use these opportunities to gather people's ideas, which are then used to directly influence strategies, budget priorities and services.

Washington state reaches out to citizens

The governor of Washington state, Chris Gregoire, recognizes the importance of incorporating the views of ordinary citizens into the work that the state government performs on their behalf. She also understands that the citizens of Washington want greater government accountability, are keen to know where their tax dollars are being spent, and want to know that they are getting the best possible customer service.

In 2006 and 2007, the governor and her staff took a highly innovative, three-staged approach to engaging citizens in state government affairs. They held Citizen Workshops, Community Leader Meetings and Town Halls to gain input at the grassroots level into the role of the government, its purpose and objectives, and in measuring its efficacy in meeting those objectives. The workshops brought together around 250 randomly selected Washington residents in two-hour sessions in five different communities around the state, to discuss and vote on areas (education, health, the economy, transportation) that the state

government should focus on and to prioritize the outcome measures under each of those areas.

The governor's senior staff and cabinet members also met with community leaders, representing a broad spectrum of interests and organizations to discuss the most important issues in communities across the state. At a series of six open Town Hall events, the governor spoke directly to more than 3,000 citizens and gave them the opportunity to ask her questions about issues that affect their lives.

Using this process, the state government's legislation, budget priorities and accountability measures are directly influenced by citizens and other community stakeholders. The results are made public, so that citizens can see what budget priorities and accountability measures were rated as most important, and can hold the government accountable for delivering on those. Performance against the priorities is also reported in monthly open performance review sessions called Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP), each of which focus on one outcome area.

02

In addition to one time or periodic consultations, government organizations should be seeking ongoing engagement from citizens and other key stakeholders in setting the agenda and shaping public services. We found many examples of government organizations creating oversight boards, program committees or councils made up of citizens and representatives of other stakeholder groups (such as employees, industry and community groups), who meet with the leaders of the administration or program to discuss issues and give their advice. Some are even empowered to set the vision, direction and budget for the organization or program and hold the administration accountable. Common examples include patient councils for health care facilities; school boards or parent councils for schools or child care facilities; tenants associations; or, in the business world, local chambers of commerce or boards of trade.

The United Kingdom's Home Office established a Victims Advisory Panel in 2003 to ensure that the needs of victims of crime are taken into account in the running of the criminal justice system. The panel, chaired by a minister, includes officials from the three criminal justice departments, ten lay members who were themselves victims of crime, as well as representatives from victims organizations. This panel has been very successful in influencing the government at a very practical level, helping to shape not only high-level policies, but also the kinds of services that are delivered and the way in which they are delivered, to ensure they take into account the needs of victims as "customers" and not just the need to prevent or punish crime.

As Andrew Sheffield of the UK's Cabinet Office told us, "If people realize that you are serious about delivering against what really matters to them, then you can start working with them in a much more creative way. You can actually get them into decisions about how services are designed. ... If you try to get into the more long-term, esoteric stuff, then you tend to over-faze the audience and they do not quite know what it is you are talking about."

Many government organizations maintain customer panels as a ready pool of "pre-qualified" service users, who are willing to provide feedback regularly on policies, issues and service developments. For example, the Singapore national government has formed a People's Forum to build an extensive pool of citizens who want to contribute their views to the government. Government agencies can use this forum to gather views on policies, issues or specific services, via straw polls, conferences and dialog sessions.

Some of the most forward-thinking governments, such as those in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Australia, are taking citizen engagement even further, empowering communities to make decisions, define and even deliver services that will affect local outcomes. Community-based decision making and budget setting has been practiced for some time in Brazil. Municipal-level councils bring together elected officials, neighborhood representatives and service providers to plan services in sectors, such as health, education and youth. A process of participatory budgeting often accompanies this planning. For example, in the city of Porto Alegre, priorities for government funding are established annually at the neighborhood level through large-scale public forums involving thousands of citizens. This very popular process is seen as an effective way to reduce corruption, improve the political behavior and accountability of elected officials, and tackle problems of social and economic inequality.

The UK government is actively encouraging citizens and community groups to participate in setting the local public service agenda through local area agreements. These agreements set out three-year priorities for the local area and are agreed upon among the central government, a local authority and key local partners including citizen groups or community representatives. Already, 22 local authorities in the United Kingdom engage to some degree in participatory budgeting, allowing their citizens to

discuss and vote on budget priorities, although this is often only a small part of the budget in one particular sector. The government wants to encourage all local authorities to run some kind of participatory budgeting scheme by 2012.

Seeking the views of employees is also important. Apart from being a good way of encouraging engagement and employee satisfaction, it is a useful way of gaining feedback from those who interact with customers every day about any issues to do with services and possible areas for improvement. Leaders in customer service ensure that they open up effective channels to capture feedback from front-line staff, including giving employees the chance to get "face-time" with the leadership. For example, the chief administration officer of the Region of Peel in Ontario, Canada spends every Wednesday afternoon talking to front-line staff, and all the individual commissioners do something similar. Another Canadian organization, Service Canada, described how it empowers employees to take a more active role in shaping and delivering service excellence. The organization captures feedback from employees in a number of ways: through input from managed discussions with staff at the regional level, which is then synthesized and escalated to central headquarters (HQ); through the leadership at HQ going out and visiting the front-line offices and talking to staff about their issues and concerns; through follow-up and evaluations of how well new services or processes are working; and through regular employee surveys, which help demonstrate progress in the areas of retention, job satisfaction and service culture.

Consulting with customers to ensure customer-centric design of services

To achieve excellence in customer service, government organizations must ensure that customers' views are taken into account in the actual design and delivery of public services. Services must be shaped around the needs and

"If people realize that you are serious about delivering against what really matters to them, then you can start working with them in a much more creative way."

Andrew Sheffield,
Director of Service Transformation, Cabinet Office,
United Kingdom

preferences of customers and, wherever possible, the actual users of services must have the opportunity to influence how those services are delivered. Through our interviews, we found a good deal of evidence that government organizations are engaging customers and other stakeholders in the actual design or redesign of services or business processes to ensure that they are designed in the most user-centric way possible. Not only does this contribute to better, more responsive services, tailored to the needs of individuals, but it also helps users understand the challenges public managers face.

Service providers can use surveys and focus groups prior to developing the service to establish customers' needs and preferences, or on an ongoing basis to understand how services could be refined to meet changing customer needs. During the process of developing the service, consumer panels can be a very useful way of testing prototype services or processes in a "safe" environment before releasing them widely.

The Australian Customs Service, for example, is beginning to employ a

customer-centric design approach in the development of its business processes and interfaces with its customers. The process begins by identifying groups of customers with different characteristics and behaviors—an example could be new exporters versus experienced exporters, or those who are struggling to fulfill their obligations versus those that manage to comply. For each of those groups, research can be undertaken to help understand their experiences as customers and the way they interact with the service. Then these groups of users are invited to collaborate in diagnosing what improvements need to be made to a system or process and are subsequently taken through and asked to comment upon a potential scenario, which shows them how the service might work (using a PowerPoint or video presentation). After refining the concept in response, the agency can move to product design and prototyping and again test the resulting prototype with users.

This approach means that the product or service is designed with the end-user experience as the starting point, rather than the technology solution or legislative requirement. However, as Fionna Granger,

national manager, Design, Australian Customs Service says, "You have a balance ... between the process-owner's view—the intent of what you are doing—and the user-experience view, and that's where your design space is. ... It is the concept of ease of use—people are much more likely to do what you need them to do if you make it easy to do."

The Australian Taxation Office works closely with taxpayers, businesses, tax professionals and others to continuously review and co-design products and services to meet users' needs. It does this primarily via a number of dedicated consultative forums, for example, the Personal Tax Advisory Group (PTAG), which represents all personal tax clients. This forum works on transaction and communication products and services while they are at the developmental stage to incorporate members' input. From this group, smaller sub-groups may be established to explore product testing and design issues relevant to particular client segments, or for other relevant consultations. A consultative forum ideally has 15 to 20 members, drawn from relevant associations and representing a range of distinct user

02

segments with different needs. For example, the PTAG represents youth, families, investors, employees and contractors, older Australians, regional and rural taxpayers, those with a non-English speaking background and immigrants, as well as other agencies, such as Centrelink.

In Singapore, the Supreme Court learned from the implementation of the Electronic Filing System (EFS) for legal documents, which had initially met with some resistance from legal practitioners. When the Supreme Court decided to try to move the legal system to the next level of electronic litigation, it started very early on to engage all stakeholders in the process. As Tan Ken Hwee, a senior assistant registrar with the Supreme Court explained, "We felt that it was necessary to make sure that we didn't have the same change management problems again and to make sure that we deliver something that lawyers really want to use. ... We thought, 'Let's make sure we have as many members of the profession as involved as possible and from as early as possible so that we start a process of having very detailed and long discussions with the members of the bar, with small firms, medium-sized and large firms, and find out what really works for them and what does not.'"

The Supreme Court, working with the Singapore Academy of Law, used a variety of methods to seek stakeholder input. It started with a one-day Electronic Litigation Colloquium, inviting representatives of all stakeholder groups to get together, so that it could canvass their opinions. It then put together a panel, with wide-ranging representation to draft the roadmap and blueprint for the development of the new electronic litigation system; these were published and a period of public consultation was held. The organization continues to consult during the system's development, using regular focus groups and stakeholder surveys, to ensure that the eventual system meets the needs of all stakeholders.

One of the standard ways in which government organizations reach out to

customers to gain their views on services is through an annual (or sometimes even less frequent) customer satisfaction survey. In some cases, this is the only time the organization proactively solicits the views of its customers. Customer satisfaction scores are used as a key measure of overall performance and targets are often written into service level agreements. A well-constructed survey can, with careful analysis, provide qualified insights into the main factors that drive overall satisfaction, or trust in a government organization and show how these might differ by customer segment. It can also be used to drive improvements in services and identify opportunities for greater integration between services.

One organization that is using customer satisfaction surveys in a highly innovative and meaningful way is the Citizenlink organization in the Netherlands. Citizenlink is tasked with measuring satisfaction with e-government. It is doing this by constructing an annual national survey, not by looking at customers of a particular department or service, but by reaching across the entire service delivery chain, based around life events (births, marriages, starting a business and so on). The survey is linked to the 10 principles of the e-Citizens Charter, testing the extent to which these principles are demonstrated in the citizens' interactions with each of the government organizations involved in their particular life event. This survey provides rich information about where things are going right or wrong and why, and the insights will be used to remedy delivery chain deficiencies. Given that the data is also available at a department level, the intention is to publish results by department to provide visibility into the best and worst performers. The survey will be conducted annually and the model will also be adapted to serve both as an instrument for local or sectoral use and as a self-test for citizens and businesses.

Several governments including those of Italy and Spain are currently focusing on improving and standardizing their approaches to measuring service quality

and customer satisfaction to be able to publish the results in a comparable way and drive continual service improvement. The key will be to ensure that their surveys truly provide customers with an opportunity to make their needs known as well as provide an avenue to give meaningful feedback or suggestions for improvement. Governments also need to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms in place to build the customer satisfaction feedback into planning, strategy development and service delivery improvements.

Using new media to educate citizens and encourage participation

To truly engage citizens in a meaningful way, governments need to ensure that they are well-informed and educated about their own rights and responsibilities, the objectives and performance of government and the constraints under which it operates. As we have asserted for many years, one of the fundamental elements of leadership in customer service is the willingness and ability of government organizations to communicate proactively with customers, promote services and encourage uptake, to educate people on their rights and responsibilities, and encourage participation. It is therefore incumbent upon government organizations to find appropriate channels through which to educate and inform citizens.

Governments and politicians around the world are beginning to realize the interactive potential of Web 2.0 and online social networking tools as a means of communicating their messages to citizens directly and cost-effectively. They also appreciate that these virtual media are an ideal channel for engaging the otherwise hard-to-reach groups, such as the younger generation, or citizens in remote locations.

In the recent United States presidential election campaign, the innovative use of the Internet, including social networking sites, was an important factor in determining how the campaign was run. More importantly, though, political

observers predict that the new president will transfer his election strategy into a governing strategy, harnessing technology to communicate directly with the public, expand political participation and connect all citizens with each other as a way of involving them in solving present-day problems.

Similarly, in Malaysia, the prime minister has launched the "Direct to the PM" website, through which citizens can send in their comments and suggestions directly to the prime minister and receive a response. Within one month of its launch, the website had received 13,773 submissions.

Politicians and public managers are also starting to use blogs, online discussion forums, message boards and online chat rooms to disseminate their messages and allow citizens to air their views on policies or administrative initiatives. The Finnish government, for example, has a dedicated website, Otakantaa.fi, for such online discussions. The US Small Business Administration holds monthly live web chats with industry leaders and successful entrepreneurs, as a way of engaging the business community in a

national dialog about issues that matter to them the most. The government of Singapore is piloting the use of social networking technologies to engage its stakeholders via a number of dedicated community portals including the REACH website, a MyHomeTown portal and a Sports portal, where interested parties can meet and share their views and useful information with one another and with the government. Users post blogs, upload videos, chat and participate in discussion forums, creating a highly engaging and dynamic forum for engagement, which is particularly appealing to younger citizens.

Governments are experimenting with using wikis to allow citizens, employees or other stakeholders to participate in the design of services. For example, the US Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) hosts a wiki on its USASpending.gov website, a one-stop searchable database of all federal government contract awards. The wiki is a page on the site where any user can comment on and recommend new functions, and read any comments already made. It is a useful way for OMB to receive users' suggestions that

are commented upon and refined by others, which they can then use to make improvements that will really help users.

The OMB is looking at other potential scenarios in which these kinds of online forums can be used to gain collective, deliberated views on policies or services. For example, it has been working with the National Academy of Public Administration to engage a diverse group of people in an online national dialog to help tackle one of the key issues confronting the United States' health care system on how information technology can be used to improve the way patients interact with the health care system, while safeguarding their right to privacy. This dialog will give participants an opportunity to discuss challenges and generate breakthrough ideas. The process will produce concrete, actionable suggestions for government leaders based on "citizen-centric" recommendations.

Live web streaming, video-on-demand, webcasts and podcasts are all being used to make government communications more engaging, in particular to a younger audience. They also act as a way of

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making participation and democracy more accessible. For example, cities such as New York are using these tools to allow citizens to watch city council meetings or specific agenda items on the city's website or on their mobile devices. In addition, e-democracy tools, such as e-voting and e-petitions, are also starting to enter the mainstream of public administration, such as in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

We have also found a small number of government organizations that are experimenting with establishing their own presence in a virtual world as a means of getting their messages to a wider audience. The US Center for Disease Control (CDC), for example has maintained an active presence in Second Life since July 2006. It created a female avatar (a virtual character) called Hygeia Philo (Greek for "lover of health") to help carry out CDC's mission in the virtual world. Hygeia has hosted a health fair and staffed a traveling health exhibit. She now has a permanent web location that conducts health education and provides web links to CDC information, such as the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, health podcasts, the Public Health Image Library, and access to other CDC resources.

The Swedish National Tax Board has also been evaluating ways in which it can provide customer-oriented communication using virtual communities. For example, it cooperated with the Stockholm School of Economics and hosted a seminar on the school's virtual island on Second Life, to educate students about tax-related matters.

In the examples above, we have seen the importance of engaging with citizens, customers and other stakeholders to define outcomes and design services around their needs. Nevertheless, stakeholder engagement, while important, is not enough in itself. Organizations that lead the field actively translate engagement into insight, and then use this to inform their mission, service design and delivery channels. In addition to consulting more with stakeholders, governments must fulfill

their side of the bargain and let stakeholders know what actions they have taken on the issues raised. In this way, government leaders are more likely to "hear" citizens correctly and develop solutions in line with their expressed priorities. This also ensures that citizens feel listened to and encourages greater trust and future participation, in a kind of virtuous circle. If citizens make the effort to express their views only to find that no action is being taken or that they are not informed about what action will be taken, they can quickly lose faith in the government as well as any interest in further engagement. In South Africa, for example, in the early days of the democracy, citizens participated very actively. However, the feeling now is that citizens' enthusiasm for participation has waned, as they have not seen their views acted upon and the expected results have not materialized.

In the leading practice examples of citizen and community participation exercises we have described in this chapter, one of the critical success factors is that the government or local council has openly published the priorities set as a result of citizen or community input. In addition, they have demonstrated that they are acting on those priorities, so that citizens can see that their views are actually producing a result. We will look in more detail at how governments do this in Practice 4 – "Be transparent. Be accountable. Ask for and act on feedback."

Recommendations

- **Engage citizens from the outset**, involving them in deciding what issues they want the government to prioritize and what specific outcomes they expect the government to achieve. How well services are being delivered is irrelevant if the services themselves do not address citizens' most important priorities
- **Educate citizens to understand the realistic parameters within which the government can operate** and the likely impacts of each potential course of action. Make it clear that there must be trade-offs—that is, greater investment in one area must mean lower investment in another.
- **Consider empowering communities to set the vision, direction and budget** for particular program areas and allow them to hold the government accountable for delivering these. If community groups are involved in providing services, they should themselves be accountable to the government. This empowerment can be achieved either at the local level (for instance, neighborhoods or local housing

associations) or among specific customer segments (for instance, services for children or the elderly).

- **Involve citizens and other stakeholders in designing or improving services, business processes and customer interfaces, to ensure that these are designed with the end-users in mind.** This helps create services that are truly customer-centric and meet the real needs of their customers, not just of the service provider. It also ensures that stakeholders are engaged in a very real and practical way, not just in influencing high-level policy decisions, but also in how the services are actually delivered.
- **Ensure public consultations are highly visible and truly accessible to all.** Publicize widely, including targeting hard-to-reach groups, and offer online channels, written or telephone submissions for those who cannot attend in person. Consider televising any live events or making them available to be viewed (and commented upon) via the Internet. Thus, ensure that the public knows you are listening.

- **Use new Internet tools, where appropriate, to drive greater engagement**, particularly among younger citizens, harnessing the power of virtual communities and fun interactive media to get key messages across. Use collaborative social networking tools to test opinions, find creative solutions to problems quickly and economically, and increase transparency of decision making.
- **Make people's views count.** Shift the emphasis from merely providing mechanisms for capturing feedback to building people's belief that their contribution does count, and that they can really make a difference. Act on the feedback you get and "close the loop" by reporting to citizens how their inputs have been used. When citizens can see the impact that their input has, they are encouraged to continue to engage and their confidence in the government grows. Consider how you could engage citizens on an ongoing basis by involving them directly in the governance structure. Be prepared for citizens to hold your organization to account for delivering on their wishes after they have been consulted.



"How can I get involved?"

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Harness all available resources.

Use the experience and resources available across government, non-profits, community groups, private businesses and individual citizens to achieve complex, cross-cutting outcomes.

In last year's *Leadership in Customer Service* study, we noted that successful approaches to addressing today's complex social problems require more than the efforts of one government agency acting alone to effect significant improvement. Crime and youth violence, neighborhood conditions, child welfare or social exclusion are just some examples of issues that often extend beyond the influence of any one agency, any one level of government, or even of government itself. Customers of services that address these issues often require diverse agencies to join up in an effort to serve them appropriately and well.

All too often, though, as the results of our citizen survey show (see Figure 7 and Figure 8), people find the providers of services to be disconnected and uncoordinated. In practical terms, this means that people do not always know where they can go for help or find the answer to their specific problem. They do not want to fill out a series of forms or deal with different individuals and departments to obtain the support they need or services they want. Regardless of how the services are structured behind the scenes,

people want to have a single point of contact and see that a coordinated effort is being made.

To tackle these problems, organizations that are achieving high performance through leadership in customer service are taking a "joined up" approach to service delivery and connecting people, not just to other government departments but to a wider network of potential providers including non-profit organizations, private businesses and community groups. By working together across the "social ecosystem," public, private and third-sector organizations are better able to address people's complex needs and thereby improve outcomes.

Collaboration across government

As the need to find more innovative, "connected" solutions to people's problems increases, so does the need for cross-government collaboration. Many early initiatives focused on creating common infrastructures to share data between agencies or provide a single point of contact for citizens to access services.

For example, we have noted in previous years' studies the many efforts to create "one-stop shops" for customers, either by grouping multiple services at a single location or access point, or by bringing together clusters of services through a single transaction.

In Ontario, Canada, the front-end integration of provincial services into ServiceOntario provides a very successful model for organizing government information and services around the needs of citizens (see ServiceOntario case study). Here, ServiceOntario has taken over the responsibility for delivering some customer-facing services—mainly high-volume transactions—on behalf of ministries and agencies across the province. Bob Stark, deputy minister and chief executive officer of ServiceOntario, attributes much of their success in transitioning so many services to ServiceOntario in a short time to a strong commitment from political leaders and the close partnering relationship they have with the various ministries. Building close relationships has been important, as ServiceOntario, in its capacity as a customer service expert, is being trusted with delivering services that it has no

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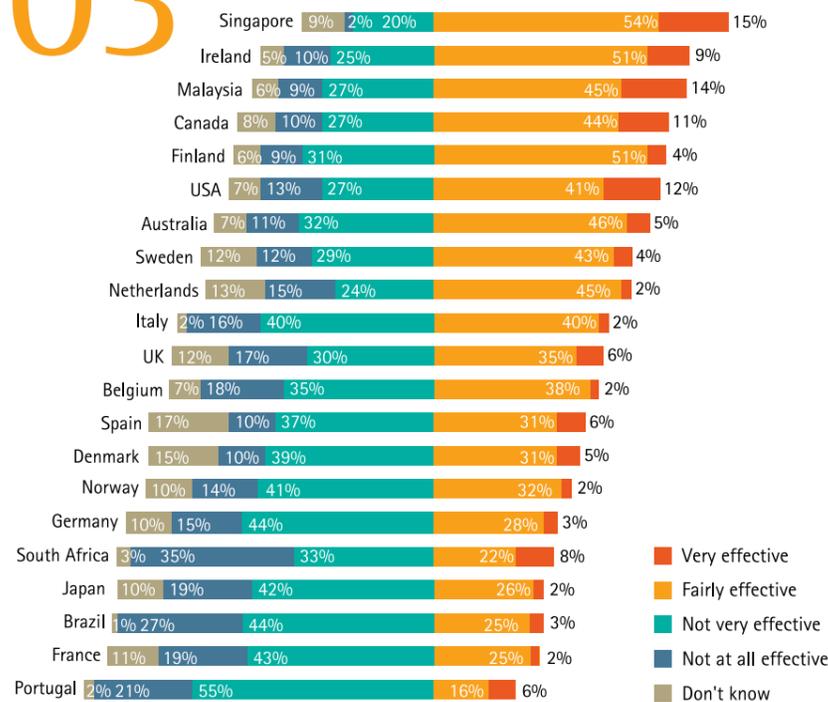


Figure 7. How effective or not do you think the different government departments and services are at working together to meet the needs of citizens?

prior knowledge of, nor experience of delivering, and it is therefore relying on the ministries to bring it up to speed.

The UK government has been another pioneer in encouraging place-based, partnering approaches, especially at the local government level. The Kent Gateway takes the traditional one-stop shop model a step further. By bringing together public and voluntary sector agencies to deliver services via a storefront location, it offers the public convenient access to a broad range of services—from adult education to housing and social services—with the help of frontline customer advisers and officers from over 30 government agencies and other partners. As Tanya Oliver, director, Strategic Development and Public Access, explained: “We constantly review possible partners and what they can bring to the initiative. Conversations [with them] have started to get easier as potential partners see how the model works, but the reengineering of services is not easy. It’s been a long journey and there is still a way to go, with other partners we want to come on board. The more evidence of success we can show, the easier it will

be to get them on board.” (See the Kent Gateway case study.)

While getting different agencies to work together presents a formidable challenge for governments, many of the government executives we interviewed talked of notable progress over the last year, as organizations began to understand the benefits and break down the barriers. As Karen Evans, administrator E-Government and Information Technology, Office of Management and Budget United States, observed, “Five years ago it took a lot of time and effort from our office to get the agencies to come together and work as one government. Now we spend less time on governance and we are actually seeing an increase in the number of initiatives that are popping up organically as cross-agency government initiatives—so agencies are coming together without needing to be persuaded by our office. ... When you look at some of the newer initiatives, I think there is recognition that the model of agencies working across boundaries is necessary and can reap tangible results.”

An example of one of these newer initiatives that targets customers with specific needs at a particular time is the Disaster Assistance Improvement Plan. Since the devastation that Hurricane Katrina caused, a collaborative effort to improve government assistance to disaster victims has been forged by a federal inter-agency task force whose goal is to create a single, consolidated system to assist disaster victims more quickly and efficiently. A new online portal, DisasterAssistance.gov, has been developed to help disaster victims identify the forms of assistance for which they may qualify. Disaster victims will also be able to check the progress of their applications online.

While there are many examples of agencies collaborating to improve service delivery, these are rarely based on joint outcomes, strategic alignment, or shared accountability for addressing complex problems. Our interviews revealed significant challenges yet to be overcome. Historically “siloeed” in their missions, agencies are often far more comfortable focusing on their own discrete outputs, rather than on mutually

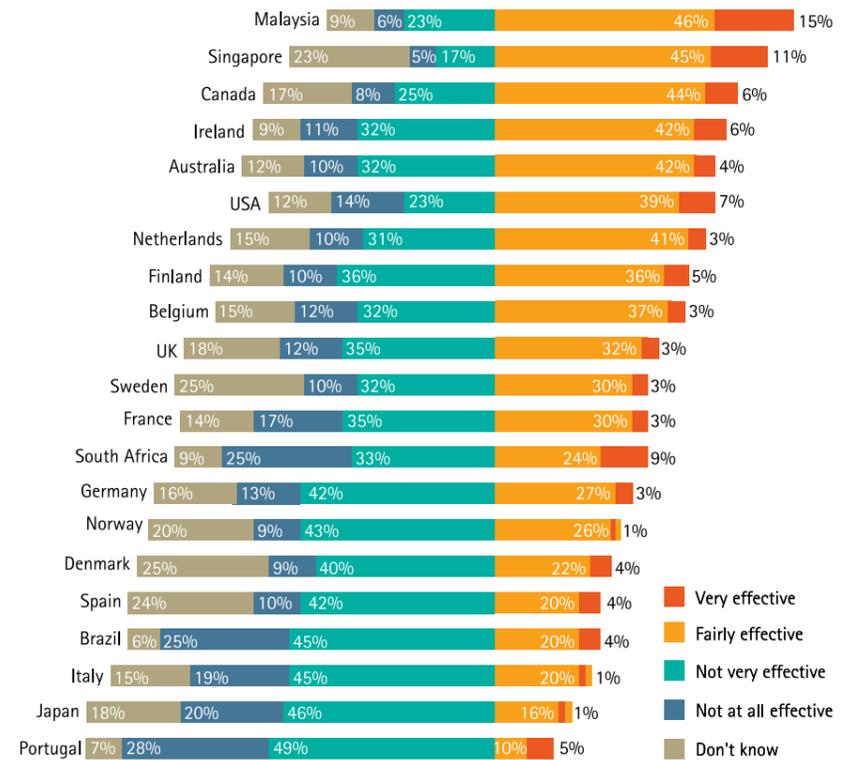


Figure 8. How effective do you think the government is at working with non-government organizations, such as businesses and voluntary/non-profit organizations, to improve the quality of your life?

agreed upon joint outcomes that directly address the needs of customers and citizens. In many cases, departments and agencies simply do not want to be responsible for achieving outcomes over which they do not have full control. There are other practical constraints, such as cultural differences between agencies and potential partners, lack of standardized methods and processes, technologies that are not integrated across agencies and difficulties in pooling resources in pursuit of a common goal.

Despite these barriers, there are many governments that are facing up to these challenges and striving to coordinate with other state agencies around specific sectors themes, such as health, education or social development. In doing so, they have been moving beyond operational collaboration toward strategic integration. This means that all agencies or departments responsible for a particular outcome area are working together to create a shared mission and outcomes, align their strategies, and assume joint responsibility for achieving their goals. Many success stories have emerged, showing a multitude of

benefits including better customer experience, improved social and economic outcomes, increased efficiency, as well as cost savings. Alongside these, we are seeing important innovations in service delivery processes.

Denmark, for example, has a relatively sophisticated mechanism for encouraging collaboration across central and local governments, which is based around a consensus-building process at the political level. This process involves two committees: an Economic Committee and a Central Coordination Committee that includes central government departmental ministers. How does this system work? The initial proposals for a program of work go through the Ministry of Finance, which determines its cost effectiveness and the potential sources of funding. After this, a series of discussions are held involving permanent secretaries from central government ministries, the deputy prime minister’s office and prime minister’s office. Their task is to ensure the proposal’s economic feasibility. Only when this has been established, do the permanent secretaries move the proposal on to the economic committee for

discussion and approval. If the proposal has political implications, it must also be examined by the central coordination committee, which the prime minister chairs and of which the eight central government department ministers are permanent members. Again, this committee scrutinizes and discusses the proposal and determines whether the desired outcomes are in line with government policy. Consensus-building activities, such as this, have allowed all of Denmark’s central government departments to understand clearly what the government as a whole wants to achieve on behalf of its citizens. It motivates each department to play its role in contributing to that outcome and also helps the Danish central government mobilize local governments to more effectively work together and deliver clusters of related services that address people’s needs in relation to different “citizen themes.”

In Belgium, the three layers of government (federal, regional and local) are attempting collaboration, often on discrete projects or programs where they can share the costs and benefits of developing new systems or processes.

03

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Karen Evans,
Administrator of E-Government and Information Technology, Office of Management and Budget,
USA

They have found that one of the major barriers to working across jurisdictions has been a financial one, as the rules on budgeting and accounting in the public sector make co-financing very difficult. However, when organizations are determined to collaborate, they have usually found ways around this; for example, by having one agency provide the upfront funding, and the other parties paying for any ongoing costs. As Béatrice Van Bastelaer, director, E-Administration and Simplification Unit in Wallonia (EASI-WAL), told us, “The trick is to change the mind set from one of ‘this is my money, this is yours’ to one of ‘this is all the same money, this is the end-user’s money.’ Then the obstacle is removed.”

Ministries in British Columbia, Canada, have always collaborated to a certain degree. Deputies from all ministries meet regularly to discuss cross-cutting issues, such as social development or natural resources. The aim is to ensure consistency in their approach and explore all opportunities for improvement. The government now, however, is also looking at ways to

improve coordination and cross-agency working within the province as a whole. As Lori Wanamaker, deputy minister Labour and Citizens’ Services explained: “We are doing a lot of work on inter-ministry collaboration. We are creating our own version of the UK’s Policy Hub (which aims to promote strategic thinking and improve policy making and delivery across government). We want to avoid reinventing the wheel and get a greater common understanding of issues—for example, a common, government-wide view on disability. It will be a significant education effort and will help agencies learn from best practices at home and elsewhere.”

One area in which there has been extensive inter-ministerial collaboration in the province has been in tackling homelessness. This issue touches other areas, such as income, mental illness and substance addiction. To date, this kind of collaboration has not involved moving people or resources between departments—it is more of a “virtual collaboration,” involving joint outreach teams made up of representatives of two or more departments. One of the

challenges they face is how to define and agree upon common outcomes and the targets and performance measures that support those. Each agency has its own targets, so any joint targets need to complement these while also being based around the clients’ needs. According to Lori Wanamaker, “The biggest issue is the cultural change. We need to get people to think, ‘I work for the public service,’ rather than ‘I work for the individual department.’”

Collaboration beyond government: Partnerships with non-governmental organizations

While many governments today are emphasizing the joining up of government services, this is only the starting point. As well as collaborating with different public agencies, they hope to build a new “co-productive” relationship between public services, private businesses, voluntary and non-profit agencies and, crucially, with citizens themselves. This is a prerequisite of producing public value. Our research has highlighted many examples where government agencies are coordinating

very effectively with less traditional partners. In doing so, they are using innovative approaches to service delivery as a means of addressing people’s complex issues.

In particular, we noted that governments are focusing on developing stronger local networks in partnership with community groups and non-profits, to understand local priorities and integrate the delivery of their services. There are advantages in working with the non-profit sector. For example, since they tend to work at the grassroots level and have close ties with the community, they have a good understanding of people’s needs and know the best way of delivering services to meet those needs. Working with non-profits provides governments with an alternative way of delivering services, which takes the pressure off their own resources—an important consideration at this time of changing workforce demographics and budget constraints.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for government lies in the different approaches that non-profits and other non-governmental organizations take to governance and accountability.

Governments need to strike a balance between their need to demonstrate accountability for achieving outcomes and allocating public funds, and their desire to allow non-profits the freedom and flexibility to make best use of their local knowledge, human resources and connections in the delivery of community-based services. Performance-based contracts are one of the tools that governments are using to define a consistent set of outputs, quality and outcomes with partner organizations.

In the Region of Peel, Ontario, for example, the Salvation Army is the delivery agency for all of the regionally-owned homeless shelters and one transitional housing program under the auspices of the human services department. The government makes significant efforts to ensure that its non-profit service delivery organizations, like the Salvation Army, are aligned with Peel’s overall vision, objective and outcomes and are accountable for delivering on those outcomes. The government has appointed staff responsible for managing that relationship. It has devised a quality-assurance program incorporating jointly

developed performance metrics into its contract with the Salvation Army. Regular meetings are held between the two organizations and the government is investing substantially in educational and training sessions to instill Peel’s “Common Purpose” vision (that is, the management framework, which ensures that the government’s people and work processes are all aligned in support of achieving defined outcomes) and help the Salvation Army’s staff develop skills they need to succeed with the performance-based approach.

In other examples we identified through our research, success depended on strong local leadership and on having the right skills for engagement. It also depended on the willingness of the government at national or state levels to relinquish some control, be flexible in its approach and support local innovation to achieve better service delivery.

In Australia, collaboration at the local level is at the heart of the Communities for Children initiative; in particular, through community groups and voluntary organizations forming consortia to develop four year strategic plans for

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improving outcomes for children aged 0 to 5 years. These community-based organizations are required to be inclusive, set up proper governance structures to collaborate effectively, and develop and implement strategies to address five key outcome areas: health and nutrition for children; early learning and care; child-friendly communities; support for parenting and parenting skills; and community-building. These groups are also required to demonstrate how they will measure success, what their targets will be and that they can manage finances and be accountable for results (including publishing annual reports). The framework is flexible, giving as much latitude as possible to a community to come up with innovative ideas about the kinds of interventions that will work in their own environment.

The program is now in its fourth year of funding. In all, consortia in 45 disadvantaged communities across Australia have been awarded funding under the Communities for Children initiative. Though it may take several years for long-term outcomes to be realized, early evaluations have shown some significant successes in improving short-term outcomes for children—for example, improved rates of breastfeeding, reduced incidence of infant illness or admissions to hospital. Early learnings indicate that such a place-based, community-owned approach is an effective model that could potentially be adopted for a whole-of-community approach, not just in the early childhood area. (See Communities for Children case study).

In Canada, the province of British Columbia has made strategic shifts in some sectors to increase reliance on third parties to deliver front-line citizen services, so that government can concentrate its efforts on larger public policy issues. The government collaborates extensively with the non-profit sector and many services, particularly social services like social housing, children and youth services, are delivered by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The province recognizes that non-profit organizations

are an important component of the service delivery framework, and have a key role to play in providing citizen-centered services.

An interesting example of a partnership delivering a community-based government service in British Columbia is the United Way, which works with the province and the not-for-profit sector to build and implement a province-wide 211—a common telephone number for information and referral for all non-emergency services. Accredited specialists answer 211 calls, assess the needs of callers and link them to the best available information and services by consulting a comprehensive and searchable database.

The province has also brought together multiple levels of government and the broader public sector to form what it calls “Service Delivery Networks” as part of its Citizen-centered Service Delivery Plan. These networks comprise a cross section of representatives from the provincial public service, the federal public service, municipalities, First Nations, school boards, colleges, health authorities and the non-profit sector, and are focused on improving service delivery to the public in their communities. They are a good example of an innovative partnership; not only because they work across traditional organizational boundaries with the common purpose of improving service to citizens, but also because they engage directly with senior decision makers. Key to the province’s success to date in improving service delivery has been the ongoing dialog and collaboration between the people responsible for front line service delivery and the decision makers in government.

We also found examples where non-profits or community groups have taken a lead in addressing social problems in their cities or neighborhoods by developing new and innovative approaches to delivering improved outcomes.

In Canada, for example, “Pathways to Education” was the brainchild of Carolyn Acker, the director of a local community

health center in Regent Park, Toronto. Recognizing the need to address the serious problems facing the community—including high crime rates, drug abuse and poverty—she created Pathways to Education as a means of reducing high school drop out rates and galvanizing the aspirations of local youth. The program has had significant success in Regent Park, not just in education, but also in providing improvements in other social areas. The program has attracted funding from a wide variety of private and public bodies. The role played by the local community health center, which is seen as a trusted local partner, has been critical in getting the initiative up and running. Over time, the program has built solid working relationships between funders, schools, the community, the health center and parents. As the program’s Chairman, Sam Duboc explained, “The success of the program is due to all stakeholders, including the passionate staff and volunteers, working together in a community-wide effort.” The Pathways to Education program is now being rolled out, through a “customizable” franchise model, in other Toronto neighborhoods and in three other Canadian cities including Ottawa and Montréal. It is expected that the program will eventually cover up to 40 sites and have around 20,000 students enrolled. (See sidebar Pathways to Education)

Pathways to Education (Canada)

Pathways to Education was created as a charitable program aimed at reducing poverty and its effects by focusing on the educational opportunities and attainment of youth in disadvantaged areas of Toronto, Ontario. The non-profit Regent Park Community Centre originally introduced the program in 2001. It was designed to reduce dropout rates and inspire youth in the troubled Regent Park neighborhood, one of the most economically disadvantaged areas in the whole of Canada.

Participation and engagement in education is seen as the best way for young people to escape from the poverty trap and help themselves. To help achieve this, the program offers four pillars of support:

- **Academic:** Tutoring in five core subjects is offered four nights a week.
- **Social:** Group mentoring is offered for students in grades 9 and 10, and career-focused mentoring for those in grades 11 and 12.
- **Financial:** Free bus travel is offered to encourage attendance, while a bursary of up to CAD 4,000 per student is made available for post-secondary education.
- **Advocacy:** The program actively aims to improve links and communication between teenagers, parents, teachers and community organizations. There is a dedicated “Student Parent Support Worker” for each participating student.

The program also aims to involve parents in helping to ensure they play an active role in the education of their child, especially where language and cultural barriers are an issue. A dedicated “Student Parent Support Worker” is assigned for every fifty pupils.

These four elements are tied together in a “contract” among pupils, parents and Pathways, which sets out rights and responsibilities for all three parties.

Pathways initially relied on donations from members of the public and from private companies. However, having

achieved some early success and with it a higher profile, greater levels of funding are now being offered by the Ontario provincial government. In November 2007, the Ontario government announced that CAD 19 million would be made available over four years to extend the program throughout the province. Pathways has also announced a new alliance with United Way of Greater Toronto (UWGT), which wants to work more closely as part of UWGT’s ongoing programs to alleviate poverty in a number of Toronto’s priority neighborhoods. This alliance entails a further grant of CAD 11 million. The investment of the Ontario government and UWGT are both intended to help the program achieve its goal of reaching more low-income students in urgent need across Toronto and Ontario. All three bodies have recognized that their aims coincide and want to build on a successful platform to deliver to a wider community base.

Since 2001, Pathways to Education’s successes have included:

- A 50 percent fall in absentee rates (in target school year groups)
- A fall in the high school dropout rate from 56 percent to 10 percent
- A 60 percent fall in the number of students classed as “academically at risk”
- An increase in post-secondary enrollment from 20 percent to 80 percent
- A 32 percent fall in the number of violent crimes (local area)
- A 56 percent fall in the number of property crimes
- A 73 percent fall in teenage pregnancy rates

An independent evaluation has identified further benefits that have arisen as a direct result of Pathways to Education’s work, which include:

- Increased government income as a result of students eventually entering higher tax brackets and spending more (sales and income tax will rise)
- Lower government spending as poverty levels fall

- Increased general health of population as poverty levels fall
- Increased aspirations of the youth population
- Safer neighborhoods for all

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Collaboration with customers and citizens

Throughout our research, we have noted the increasing importance that some governments are placing on the role of citizens in improving outcomes for themselves—by taking more personal responsibility for their own behavior and lifestyle—and their communities. The government has a key role to play in educating people about their rights and responsibilities in relation to their own lives. These range from promoting individual preventive measures, such as eating a better diet, to enrolling them as co-producers of public value, for example, by encouraging more active community participation or volunteering. In general, the educative and enrolling roles are vastly underused at present, but we did find examples of governments—and citizens themselves—who are taking a far more proactive approach.

As Lori Wanamaker, deputy minister, Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services, British Columbia, explained, "It's about a shift of responsibilities—putting more control and responsibility into the hands of citizens or business. And it is outcomes-focused: getting society to take more responsibility for improving their own outcomes."

To this end, the British Columbia government has adopted education campaigns using both a "pull strategy"—making information available, for example, on the Web, for people to access themselves—and a "push strategy," through proactive campaigns, such as the "Act Now" healthy living campaign. The objective of Act Now is to encourage a healthy, active lifestyle for British Columbians. The government holds special events, provides information and tools on how to live healthily (tackling topics, such as smoking, obesity, healthy eating in schools, and active retirement) and has set up a task force on ageing. The campaign uses a variety of channels including paid media (TV, newspapers, radio), printed products, the new government Intranet and many community activities. It also works with

people in schools and the agricultural community to get its messages across.

In the United Kingdom, we found examples of people getting more actively involved in ensuring that the services they get from national and local government are actually meeting their needs. The Partnership for Older People (POPP) project led by the Department of Health relies not just on the collaborative efforts of public and voluntary sector agencies, but also on the active involvement of older people who volunteer their time in a variety of capacities. The department has provided funding to council-based partnerships that have successfully bid to set up two-year pilot projects. The aim is to re-direct care of the elderly into the community rather than institutions.

One such pilot, the North Lincolnshire "Fresh Start" project, has involved locally based older people to co-design the choice and delivery method of services. Each Fresh Start center has a management committee of older residents in the area, who decide which services older people locally require and then work with the local authorities, health care providers and voluntary organizations to ensure that those services are delivered in a collaborative way. The centers act as a "hub" for the delivery of services to the elderly, allowing a greater degree (and greater effectiveness) of cross-referrals between service providers. They ensure that elderly customers receive all services to which they are entitled or from which they could benefit. These services include health checks, home fire inspections, social events, computer courses and bereavement counseling, among others.

Our research produced other evidence of people showing a willingness to contribute their time and efforts to support the wider community—including schools, churches, hospitals, and local non-profits. In the city of Los Angeles, for instance, where Mayor Villaraigosa maintains that every individual has an obligation to society, the city government has put a strong emphasis on providing opportunities not just for

community service, but for community building as well. Villaraigosa has sponsored 16 "community days of service" since his 2003 election as a City Council member and subsequently as mayor. The largest of these—2007's Big Sunday—brought more than 50,000 volunteers from across the city to service projects all around town. People are also encouraged to volunteer through a number of initiatives, such as after-school programs, day camps, senior programs, sports instruction and teen programs, which are run through the Department of Recreation and Parks.

In Singapore, the government is taking an innovative approach to getting people to contribute to the community as a means of improving their own circumstances. The Neu PC Plus program and iNSPIRE Fund have been established to provide needy families with school-going children with a free personal computer and broadband access. This ensures that children from disadvantaged families are not left out of the IT market due to economic circumstances. In exchange for the computer, students render 6 to 12 hours of community service (depending on the child's age), such as helping out in homes for the elderly. The children's teachers or the staff of the voluntary welfare organizations must endorse the community service records and send them to the Singapore Children's Society for processing.

People are also getting more involved in improving social and economic conditions by taking an active role in social networking and exploiting the use of public information for the benefit of the wider community. "Data mashing," for example, is a process of reusing published information by merging it with other, different types of data. Most commonly, it involves combining mapping data from the likes of Google with, for instance, crime or transport data, to produce new products or services. ChicagoCrime was an early example of this. It took city crime statistics and plotted them onto Google Maps, providing residents of the city with a virtual view of the total crime picture

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Lori Wanamaker,
Deputy Minister, Labour and Citizen Services,
British Columbia, Canada

across the city and assisting them in problem-solving and combating crime and disorder in their neighborhoods. ChicagoCrime is now part of EveryBlock, an organization funded by a private foundation, which filters and tracks local information on a range of topics for nine cities across the United States.

The Cabinet Office in the United Kingdom is proving to be very proactive in exploring the potential for the enhanced use of data. In June 2008, it set up the "Show Us A Better Way" competition for people to develop their own ideas and solutions to concrete problems. Through the competition, people were encouraged to create mash-ups from public-sector information. Among the data made available is a list of all schools from the Department for Children, Schools and Families; Ordnance Survey mapping information; neighborhood statistics from the Office of National Statistics; and notices from the London Gazette on issues ranging from corporate insolvencies to ecclesiastical appointments. Entrants could combine the data with their own material to create information tailored to specific groups or needs. In essence, this meant asking people, for the first time, to

co-design public services. The taskforce picked the best entry (Can I Recycle It—a website to help people find recycling facilities) and presented its originator with a prize of GBP 20,000 to develop the service further.

In the United States, the District of Columbia has recently run a similar mash-up competition to encourage software applications that leverage the state's data catalog for the benefit of citizens. In the future, such initiatives—driven by non-profits, associations, interest groups and individual citizens—will help to complement government action in some critical areas.

All of the above examples help to demonstrate the powerful impact of collaborative working across sectors and the value that can be created when people take more responsibility for their own behavior or contribute their efforts for the good of the wider community. Leaders in customer service will help to facilitate the creation of these partnerships and networks, and will put a greater emphasis on enrolling customers and citizens as co-producers of public value.

Recommendations

- **Clearly understand the drivers for collaboration;** that is, the high-priority issues and customer-service needs that require the collaborative efforts of multiple actors. True collaboration depends on organizations from different sectors working together effectively to understand the needs and preferences of individuals and their communities.

- **Determine which model to adopt to facilitate partnership working and design the approach accordingly.** Collaboration requires a shared understanding and good judgment about who needs to be involved to deliver services for citizens. Success or failure depends on the partnership's design and the choice of service delivery methods. Organizations must therefore be very careful about the selection criteria on which to base their decisions about choice of partners and the kinds of services they will provide.

- **Work toward a set of clearly defined and mutually agreed upon joint outcomes.** First, these outcomes must be defined in conjunction with all stakeholders. Second, they must reflect

and address as closely as possible the needs and circumstances of service users. Third, stakeholders at all levels including politicians, civil servants and service providers have to buy into, understand and actively contribute to the achievement of those outcomes. Organizations must take responsibility for measuring and evaluating progress toward the outcomes. However, they must also have realistic expectations about what can be achieved in the short to medium term.

- **Put in place strong leadership to direct the effort, with sufficient organizational and budgetary authority to make decisions.** Leaders should act as strong role models for collaboration by encouraging partnerships and making success in joint modes of working a key priority for senior management. They must reinforce the importance of a team-oriented approach to problem solving and effective communication. They must be responsive to different points of view and drive a performance culture that sets a high store on innovative solutions unconstrained by traditional structures or approaches.

They must, however, also understand the broader context and make careful judgments about when to intervene when problems arise. Where appropriate, leadership roles should be created at all levels and distributed across all partners—even among those contributing smaller shares of the budget or other resources.

- **Back up the desire to work jointly with the necessary budget and resources.** The ways of managing budgetary contributions and the deployment of resources from different partners should be agreed upon. Use mechanisms such as pooled budgets or collaboratively set performance targets for individual employees as a means of promoting work that is carried out jointly. Governments should monitor the innovative approaches and initiatives that non-governmental organizations and individual citizens are adopting to improve community outcomes. Where appropriate, governments should provide support in the form of finance, information and other resources, to help these initiatives get underway and achieve sustainable results.

- **Put in place sound governance and accountability structures.** Partnership approaches to public service design and delivery require careful management, since these are relationships based on mutual trust. Governance and accountability frameworks should be underpinned by a written agreement—such as a memorandum of understanding—outlining the roles, responsibilities and contributions of each agency. Sufficient and appropriate resources must be available to undertake the required tasks, while consistent service standards need to be enforced to ensure the desired results. Shared performance indicators—aligned with incentives and reporting systems—must be agreed upon and enforced through centralized control and monitoring systems, holding all partners to account for performance. Governance committees must meet on a regular basis, and there must be a process in place to escalate and resolve problems. An effective governance structure filters throughout the organization, from top-level decisions on the budget and strategic direction of the partnership through to agreements on operational issues.

- **Make necessary organizational or workforce changes.** For effective collaboration, government and non-government employees need the right skills and competencies to work together. It is the government's job to ensure that a common culture, language, values and relevant skills are instilled in the workforce. This may mean retraining or reskilling of staff to enable collaborative working and bolstering customer service skills. Additionally, collaborative working is only practical if there is a reengineering of processes and systems to ensure that these are integrated across all partners. IT systems need to be interoperable, not least for information to be shared effectively. Finally, successful collaborations are characterized by an organizational culture that is flexible and open to the innovation and creativity of all partners.



"How do I know the government is delivering what it promises?"

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Be transparent. Be accountable. Ask for and act on feedback.

Focus on improving transparency, accessibility of information and the means for people to address their governments directly, so that customers can hold their governments accountable for the quality of services delivered.

In this year's citizen survey, we learned that government transparency and accountability are at the core of what drives people's trust and belief in their government's ability to improve their quality of life. In most countries, when customers feel better informed about services and performance and believe that their government is accountable for what it achieves, they trust their government more. Figure 9 shows that the majority of respondents in most countries do not perceive that governments are accountable for what they achieve. It also demonstrates the strong relationship between trust and accountability in most of the countries we surveyed.

Those organizations that demonstrate high performance through leadership in customer service recognize the importance of making their services and the outcomes they achieve more transparent and accountable, and are taking action to ensure that this happens.

First, leaders in customer service are actively providing information about their policies, programs and services. They realize that they need to do much

more to educate citizens; this involves helping people clarify their own needs and perceptions of government, which means making the right type of information available to customers in an easily understandable and accessible way. They know that this will also mean putting in place mechanisms to help customers take action based on that information to make better decisions about their own lives and get more involved in their communities.

Second, leaders in customer service are providing people more information to give them greater visibility and control of the service delivery process. In the private sector, the principle of tracking and tracing has proven to be very successful with customers who are ordering goods, buying tickets on line, sending parcels and so on. It prevents extra phone calls, saves time (and money) and enhances consumer satisfaction. This kind of "self service" can be introduced in government transactions to the same ends.

Third, leaders in customer service are more transparent about regularly reporting on outcomes—that is, the actual results that governments achieve.

They publish appropriate performance data that clearly demonstrates whether the services an organization is providing are helping to meet its intended goals. People also want to compare their public services with those in other areas and assess whether the quality of these services is improving over time so that they can hold governments to account for their actions.

Finally, leaders in customer service are able to identify and resolve customer complaints and issues effectively as they arise. This is one of the major factors influencing customers' perception of services and trust in the government. It is therefore vital for customers to have easily accessible and transparent ways of raising and following up on complaints. Governments must also demonstrate that they are ready to learn from these cases and identify and resolve systemic issues.

Although governments have had mixed experiences in putting transparency and accountability into practice, we found many examples of organizations that are prioritizing their efforts to address these four areas.

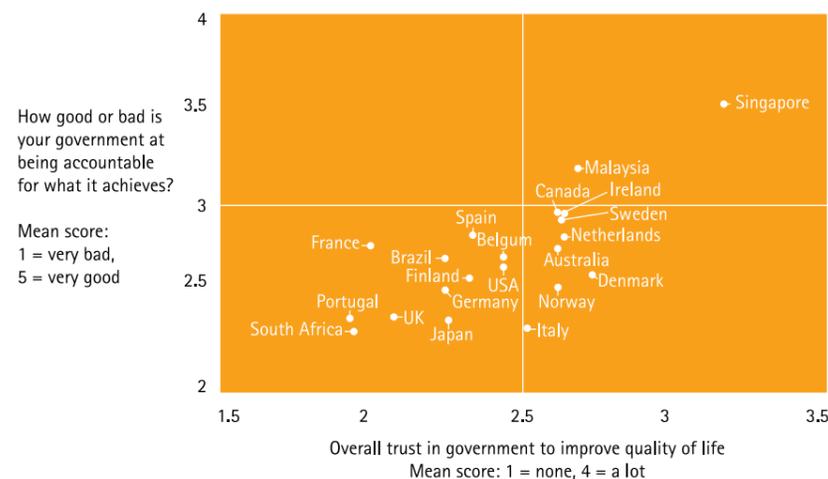


Figure 9. Relationship between citizens' perception of their government's level of accountability and their overall trust in government.

New York City Focuses on Transparency and Accountability

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg is championing three strategic priorities for the city's government services: accessibility, transparency and accountability. Mayor Bloomberg wants to embed these themes into the delivery of all government services.

In 2007, the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) published PlanIT, which is directly aligned with and linked to these three critical goals. The strategies, tactics, and specific programs and applications described in this information technology plan will enable these goals to be achieved. They include the following:

- To make government services more **accessible**, the city will use technology to make it easier for people to obtain information and services, simplify navigation among the various city agencies that provide these services and allow the public to obtain information and services in their own language in a way that is convenient for them.

- To build greater **transparency** into government activities, the city will use technology to improve the visibility of its operations. Whether using a scorecard to indicate an agency's performance, or making it easier to obtain updates on the status of a service request, information will be made available to all constituents.

- The city will develop IT applications to ensure **accountability**. It will use performance information to improve service levels and hold agencies accountable for achieving targeted service levels through the new Citywide Performance Reporting system and the Mayor's Management Report.

With PlanIT, the transformation of the way the city works is continuing. Responding to customers' needs—the requirements and expectations of businesses, residents, visitors and employees—is the core purpose of the strategic initiatives emerging from the Plan.

Transparency and availability of government information

People want better access to relevant and understandable information about the government services they need or use regularly. Ensuring that people are better informed about policies, programs and services is an important way of generating more positive customer attitudes about the quality of the public services they receive as well as helping people take greater responsibility for their own lives. It means getting the right information to the right people at the right time.

While governments already produce a great deal of information of interest to people for a variety of purposes, some forward-thinking governments and public service organizations are taking innovative approaches to maximizing the use of this information. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the government commissioned the independent Power of Information review to assess how non-personal public sector information can be reused and reinvigorated outside of government to generate public and economic value. The review concluded

that, "There are social and economic benefits to new ways of making and sharing information, whether involving government, citizens, or both." For example, medical studies of breast cancer and HIV patients have shown that people who participate in online communities understand their condition better and generally show a greater ability to cope. In the case of HIV, lower treatment costs also tend to result, according to research from the United States.

In other examples, service users and non-profits are linking with the government to improve the transparency of information on services and are hence encouraging greater accountability and providing an impetus to improve service levels. Based on their experiences with the private sector, where a number of methods are available to compare products and services, people are demanding better ways of assessing public services. There are some moves underway to introduce this as a practice in the public sector, through better information about quality and service, as a way of empowering citizens to make better choices.

In another example from the United Kingdom, the NHS Choices website (nhs.uk) publishes data to enable people to make informed choices about their health care. Some information is provided by the patients themselves, including information on the outcomes of surgery and other medical procedures or levels of patient satisfaction with hospitals and clinics. Patient Opinion, a not-for-profit social enterprise that compiles patients' reports on their experiences with the NHS, has now combined its own patient feedback with that from the NHS Choices website, thereby making even more information available. This gives the public a broader view of the quality of care and helps people make better decisions about their own needs, simply by running a search based on postcode (or area code) and the relevant condition.

Chicago's Citizen and Law Enforcement Analysis and Reporting

In Chicago, the Police Department has made huge strides in its ability to fight crime through the adoption of Citizen and Law Enforcement Analysis and Reporting (CLEAR), which is based on quality, real-time information and citizen participation. The whole idea behind CLEAR was to get the right information to the people who need it most, when they need it most. Chicago's major crime rates have been dropping every year since CLEAR went live in 2003 and the CLEAR system is widely credited as the primary factor in this.

CLEAR builds on the basic concept of data-driven crime mapping (an initiative pioneered in New York City's Compstat program) by creating a widespread and cross-cutting system of information gathering, storage and retrieval that gives all law enforcement officials—from street cops to senior managers—as well as citizens, an up-to-date view of local crime.

The Ash Institute at the John F. Kennedy School of Government recognized the initiative by bestowing on it the Innovations in American Government award, based on the following key benefits:

- A single source of real-time crime data: Officers can access up-to-date crime data from their police cars at any time of day. The system cross-references against multiple databases of information on arrests and past convictions, criminal activity and incident reports on stolen vehicles and property. Using CLEAR's crime-mapping capabilities, officers can efficiently pinpoint hot spots of criminal activity and focus their deterrence efforts accordingly.
- Administrative efficiency: Officers have remote, 24/7 access to valuable criminal data, through desktop, laptop, mobile and handheld devices, which dramatically reduces the time required to find data and submit paperwork.
- Community engagement tools: CLEAR promotes community participation by

providing searchable information through a public website. New citizen-facing databases on registered sex offenders and wanted individuals on the CLEAR system encourage civic participation in deterring crime. Citizens can submit crime tips online and have access to crime-mapping information.

- Reduced barriers to data sharing: The CLEAR system facilitates criminal data sharing across agencies and jurisdictions to support the enhanced coordination of intelligence operations.

One of the most significant benefits of CLEAR to citizens and community groups has been that the push to include citizens and local businesses in its design has served to create a tighter relationship between the police and the community. More than 20,000 citizens and local businesses now subscribe to a service through CLEAR that offers regular updates on what is happening in specific neighborhoods, including alerts if the police sees—or anticipates—a rise in crime in a particular area, or if they need help finding a particular person.

04

Transparency and service delivery processes

Today, government is serving a more sophisticated and enlightened customer base. People's expectations have risen in line with the quality of service delivery many private sector companies offer. Now they are expecting more transparency and control over the service delivery process in public services; for instance, by being able to track the status of their transactions and find out whether their service needs are being adequately met.

Leaders in customer service are addressing this need by improving the transparency of their service delivery processes. In Singapore, for example, the Central Provident Fund Board now enables its customers to track the status of their transactions online. As CPF Board's Hock Keong Ng commented, "I think one of our main challenges is that we are raising the expectations of our customers. Through the Customer Relationship Management System ... they are able to track the status of their transactions online at any time. So there is total transparency of the status of application forms, for example. Customers can call you and say, 'I've been seeing that the status has been "pending approval" for the past three days. What happened to the case?' So I think the service experience between customers and us has changed. But that also poses us a greater challenge in how we are able to manage and exceed their expectations."

Hock Keong Ng also noted the upside of this increased functionality: as customers are able to self-check their status, they make fewer calls to the CPF Board, freeing up staff time for other critical work. "So I think it's a win-win, but we just have to change the way we work."

Benefits are likewise flowing to CPF Board's own business, particularly in the area of compliance. This is now easier to enforce because CPF Board has improved transparency around its rules and obligations. According to Hock Keong Ng, "Customers can better

understand why the rules exist and the rationale behind them. And because they are better informed, the chances of compliance are higher. Being more transparent has also allowed us, for example, to provide an online service for an employee to whistle-blow their employer for not making their CPF contribution on time. With the accounts online, employers are more wary of their name being flagged up on the website as a complaint case. In short, I think we have improved the transparency in our services and, in return, the citizens find it easier to be more compliant with the government rulings, as we have been able to explain the rules to them better. I think that is an extremely positive impact of good e-service implementation."

New York City is also making great strides in enabling people to check the status of their service requests through the 3-1-1 system, a "virtual" agency that enables people to access government information and non-emergency services through a single phone number. Today, when a caller requests a service through 3-1-1, the request is passed on to the servicing agency, with limited visibility by 3-1-1 into the status of the request. The goal is to integrate agency systems with the Customer Service Management System so that information is provided more seamlessly, and callers can easily check the status of their request. The city has also linked 3-1-1 services to nyc.gov, allowing people to get online status information on 3-1-1 service requests and send pictures to supplement select service requests. (See the New York City case study.)

Transparency and accountability for service quality and results

It is clear that governments need to focus on providing more transparency and accountability for the quality of their services, and explain how they use taxpayers' money and what results they have achieved. An absence of transparency fuels people's perceptions that services are wasteful and inefficient, and slowly erodes their trust in government.

Governments around the world have therefore been making more concerted efforts to measure their performance. However, these measurements are often based on inputs, processes and outputs, rather than on outcomes and citizen satisfaction. How, then, does the government know if it is truly succeeding in achieving its mission? How do customers know? How can the government be sure that it is meeting people's expectations about its quality of service?

Those organizations that are leaders in customer service are systematically managing their performance against outcome targets and communicating results to their stakeholders who demand this information. They are also taking steps to ensure that their reports are designed for public consumption: easy for ordinary citizens to understand and, very importantly, connected to issues that citizens care about.

In Des Moines, Iowa, United States, for example, the city government is making greater efforts to be accessible and accountable to the public that it serves. According to its 2007 *Resident Satisfaction Survey*, just 48 percent of residents were satisfied with the availability of information on city programs and services, and only 47 percent were satisfied with the city's attempts to keep them informed. Recognizing room for improvement, the government created a report that offers a significant amount of information about city programs and services. This information not only explains what is being done to improve the quality of life in the community, but also how effective and efficient these efforts are proving.

There are, however, major challenges in increasing transparency and accountability. If governments are increasingly grouping different services around outcomes and people's full range of needs in a way that is seamless and invisible to the citizen, how do they, at the same time, let citizens know who is going to be held to account for making sure that outcomes are being achieved and their needs are being met?

"I think that the more critical part of the development of the Citywide Performance Reporting system was the year-long effort that we spent sitting down with each of the 44 agencies and really pulling apart what the reason for each agency's existence was and how we and they would most want to measure their performance."

Carole Post
Director, Agency Services, New York City,
USA

The New York City government has gone some way toward addressing this challenge with its new City-wide Performance Reporting (CPR) system, an online performance measurement tool that makes the workings of the government transparent. Launched in February 2008, the CPR system gives New Yorkers access to regularly updated performance data from all city agencies. It is making more than 500 indicators available online that are integral to New Yorkers' quality of life. Importantly, the system aggregates the data into "city-wide themes," all of which are influenced by a number of different agencies, so that citizens can see how well the city is performing in key outcome areas, such as education, social services or public safety. CPR highlights performance that is declining, providing early warning for areas that need attention. (See sidebar on New York-Better Government through Customer Service.)

The process of creating the CPR involved starting with a clean slate in terms of each agency's responsibility and accountability. As Carole Post, director,

Agency Services in the Mayor's Office, explained: "I think that the more critical part of the development of CPR was the year-long effort that we spent sitting down with each of the 44 agencies and really pulling apart what the reason for each agency's existence was and how we and they would most want to measure their performance. So we said let's start from scratch: why do you exist and if you exist for XYZ reason, how do we measure your performance in delivering on XYZ. So we really tried to get to the crux of the most critical performance metrics."

New York's approach to measuring performance, however, goes further. Recognizing the need to look not just at progress in achieving outcome goals, but also at the satisfaction that people feel with their public services, it recently conducted a large public opinion survey of New York residents. As Carole Post told us: "I do not think you can get any more citizen-centric than this effort. It came up in the context of saying that this city and this administration have been very effective at measuring our own performance; very data-driven, but we have not as yet actually turned

outwardly and asked our residents how do you think we are doing in terms of delivering city services."

The data from the survey, together with the CPR data and the data that is derived from the 3-1-1 contact center, will create deeper insights to help the city government understand its performance and enable citizens to hold it accountable for its results and the quality of its public services.

Among other efforts to promote transparency and public accountability, government managers are considering ways to involve the public in making performance measurement and reporting more relevant and meaningful. By involving citizens in establishing and implementing performance management, governments foster a broader sense of awareness and ownership of their programs on the part of the public. Citizen involvement helps clarify the priorities of communities and enables the public to play an active role in holding officials accountable and improving services for the community.

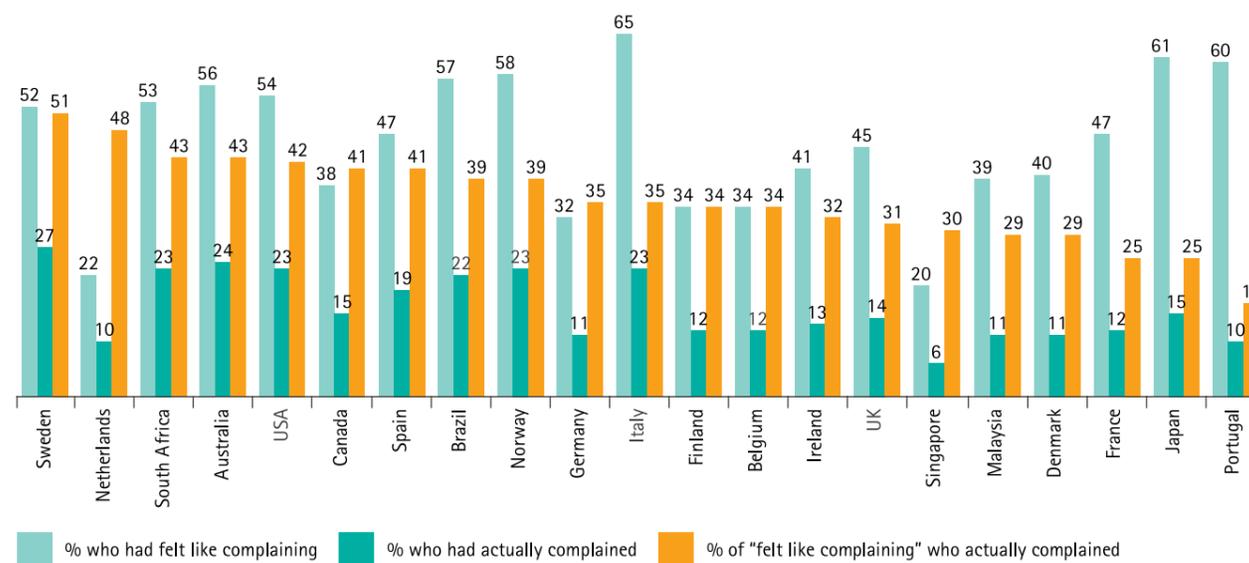


Figure 10.
Likelihood of complaining about government department or services

There is an increasing number of examples of citizens and community groups becoming more involved in tracking government performance. This might involve, for example, public officials and citizen participants sharing decision making power and acting as equal partners in designing performance measures and reviewing performance information. In some cases, it involves citizens and community groups taking a lead in determining performance indicators that government programs should be judged on (for example, in the case of quality of life indicators) and reporting back information to inform these indicators.

One example of this is the Center on Municipal Government Performance's Computerized Neighborhood Environment Tracking program, or the ComNET initiative in the United States. This initiative was based on research that revealed that people's judgments about city government performance are often determined by the conditions they observe on city streets. By using palmtop technology, several organizations in the United States are equipping citizens with an efficient means of gathering and

transmitting to local government agencies information about physical problems they observe in their neighborhoods. The digital format allows government officials to respond easily to the data about conditions in their neighborhoods and parks. The sorting of problems can be readily automated and data transmitted to the right agency. Also, by building up their own databanks and digital maps of observed problems, citizens can track whether the government has actually solved the problems and kept them solved, thereby holding public officials accountable for results. The initial success of ComNET in New York has prompted groups in many other communities across the United States to adapt the technology for their citizens to use.

Providing mechanisms for public recourse

Involving citizens in establishing, implementing and evaluating measures of performance can help governments foster a broader sense of awareness and ownership among their citizens along with a willingness to act as co-

producers. The flip side of this, of course, is that governments have to make it possible for people to voice their views, concerns and complaints and to have those complaints resolved quickly.

Our 21-country citizens' survey highlighted a real issue with the complaints handling process. Although a majority of citizens in many countries told us they had felt like complaining about a government service, only a much smaller proportion had actually made a formal complaint (See Figure 10). Of those people who had felt like complaining, only 35 percent across the 21 countries actually made a complaint. This varied widely across countries—citizens with a grievance in Sweden and the Netherlands were more likely to have actually made a complaint than frustrated citizens in Portugal and Japan, where only 17 percent and 25 percent respectively had actually done so. Our research also showed that, statistically, the willingness or ability of citizens with a grievance to actually complain about government departments or services has a strong relationship with their overall

trust and confidence in government (a correlation of 71 percent).

This worrying prevalence of unexpressed and unresolved frustrations may have to do with lack of visibility and accessibility of channels of public recourse. Citizens simply do not know where to go, or whom to call or write to about an erroneous or missing benefit payment, poor hospital treatment or slow or unhelpful customer service. It can be difficult enough to know which government organization delivers the service they are receiving, let alone to fathom which part of the organization they need to contact to make a complaint about that service. This issue can be even more difficult if the problematic service or services have spanned multiple providers.

Inaccessibility of recourse can have an impact on the equality of social and economic outcomes. If complaints systems are opaque, complex and burdensome, only the most knowledgeable, persistent and articulate in society will be able to complain and have their problems resolved. In order to improve equality of service provision and

outcomes, it is important that complaint systems be clear and easy to navigate, so that they do not act as a barrier to less articulate or less persistent people and, in particular, to vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.

Many of the governments we interviewed have taken steps to tackle this issue. The Portuguese government, for example, has recognized that the accessibility of public recourse is an issue that it needs to address. Currently, each agency has its own complaints procedure and access channels, which citizens have to navigate their way through in order to seek redress. Having run a successful pilot in the Portuguese Tax Agency, the government is planning to implement a new integrated system to redress all complaints related to public services. This system would provide easily accessible channels for citizens to make their complaints as well as be a consistent and effective system for resolving those complaints and improving services.

Leaders in customer service ensure that they offer multi-channel complaints mechanisms in the same way that they

provide multi-channel services. Governments need to make sure that ways of making complaints, such as web links, free-phone numbers and contact addresses, are well publicized and signposted from each service delivery channel. They need to be clearly stated on the service or department's website, included in written communications, displayed at front-office counters or provided as an option in the interactive voice response menus of their phone lines. Providing consistency in responses across all complaints channels, or even a single point of access for all complaints regardless of department, will help ensure that citizens understand where they can go to seek redress.

The Australian federal government provides an example of such a single point of contact. The National Complaints Line has been set up and it not only provides information about complaints procedures, but also helps people lodge complaints against any federal government department or government agency, including the Federal Police. This National Complaints Line is one of the services offered by the Commonwealth Ombudsman, which

considers and investigates complaints about Australian Government departments and agencies. Interestingly, in our survey, a larger proportion of Australians with a complaint to make had actually made it, compared to most other countries.

However, the issue may not simply be one of knowing where to go to complain. It may also be that citizens do not go to the trouble of making a complaint because they lack faith in the government organization to do anything about it. Our survey data showed that of those that actually made a complaint, only 26 percent of respondents thought that their government had effectively resolved the issue they had complained about. Respondents in Brazil, Italy, Spain, Portugal and South Africa were the most negative about their government's resolution of their complaints, with between two-thirds and three-quarters of complainants saying their government had not resolved their complaint effectively. Once again, this could indicate several issues. It could be, for instance, that citizens' complaints are not being heeded and

nothing is being done to resolve issues, or it could simply be that governments are not doing a good job of letting citizens know about the steps they are taking to improve services on the basis of feedback received.

Citizens expect their complaints to be responded to in a timely manner and to be dealt with fairly and appropriately. In some countries, maximum response times for complaints are standardized across government, or even established in law. However, many government organizations are struggling to adequately monitor and manage the response to and appropriate resolution of complaints. This can be exacerbated when the front-end customer service organization receiving the complaints is not the service provider that can actually resolve the issue and complaints need to be redirected to the specific service provider. This can cause a disconnect; meaning that the front-end office cannot "close the loop" with customers and communicate the progress of their complaint, nor can it centrally monitor the effectiveness of complaints resolution.

For example, the Region of Peel has a centralized customer contact center that resolves many customers' complaints. Those that cannot be resolved at the first-tier level are directed to the appropriate program area for resolution. This model allows Peel to centrally track volumes and types of complaints and analyze trends. At present, however, once the complaint leaves the contact center, it is no longer tracked—which means that Peel cannot centrally monitor all complaint resolution nor close out complaints, something which the organization would like to be able to do.

In addition to resolving customers' immediate issues, government organizations should proactively monitor and analyze data from complaints, for example, trends in volumes and the nature of complaints over time, in order to identify and address systemic problems, find opportunities to improve service design and delivery and thereby enhance their relationship with customers and citizens. The principles of learning from mistakes and continual feedback should be central to all government organizations.

"There are bound to be some service lapses. But what is important is how we manage the service lapses, how we do service recovery and how can we move forward to delight the customers and to maintain high customer satisfaction. I think that is the key of a good customer service oriented or customer-centric organization."

Hock Keong Ng,
Director, Customer Relations, Central Provident Fund Board,
Singapore

The Dutch Tax and Customs Administration is one organization, which takes its obligations to hear and act upon customers' complaints very seriously and has a rigorous system for managing complaints and taking action. Every regional tax office has its own complaints officer, as does the central call center. This officer receives formal complaints in writing (currently around 400 per year), which have to be answered in strict order of receipt, as all Dutch citizens have the right to have their complaint heard and handled, and receive a written response within four weeks. If complainants are not satisfied with the answer, they can escalate their complaint to the next level of the organization. Recognizing how important it is to the customer relationship that complaints are handled appropriately, the call center tries always to have personal contact with each complainant to ensure their issue is resolved satisfactorily. In addition, the complaints officer produces quarterly reports on the number and nature of complaints, and makes recommendations for improvements to processes or approaches. If issues arise that are more

urgent, they are acted upon immediately. Simon Sibma, chairman of the Management Team of the Tax and Customs Administration's call center says, "We use a formal approach, because everybody has the right to formal complaint-handling. But we also try to make it personal and we try to use it for improving the organization."

The Australian Customs Service has also put a strong emphasis on offering opportunities for customers to complain or make suggestions and managing that feedback effectively. As Fionna Granger put it, "You cannot make a phone call into the organization without being offered an opportunity to give feedback." The organization has established a national Customer Complaints Management System for collecting and acting on client feedback in a consistent and appropriate way. There is a "Complaints and Compliments" link on the home page, giving users the option to complain via an online form, email, free phone or directly to a customs officer. The organization's Client Service Charter and complaints management policy are also published on the website,

as well as its quarterly Complaints and Compliments report. This simple report provides an overview of the number and nature of complaints and compliments received, monitors quarterly trends and highlights the best- and worst-performing regions and facilities. It also reports on complaint response times and compares performance against targets in the charter. These reports are analyzed to identify trends and systemic issues, and used to help improve services and address problem areas, while also giving credit to areas of the organization that receive compliments.

Service Canada is also demonstrating its commitment to excellence in customer service through its approach to managing complaints. It has a highly transparent, three-step public recourse procedure. All Service Canada offices have client feedback cards (both physical cards and web-based forms), which customers can fill out to pay a compliment, make a recommendation or a complaint. In the first instance, it is the responsibility of the office manager to handle and resolve those pieces of feedback, and if they cannot resolve complaints adequately, to escalate them to where they can be

04

addressed effectively. If customers feel they are not getting redress at the local level, they can make their complaint or recommendation to the Office for Client Satisfaction (OCS), which has a commitment to respond to all complaints within 24 hours and resolve them within seven working days. To date, both of these targets have been met 100 percent of the time. The OCS also monitors and analyses complaints, in order to identify and escalate systemic issues. It publishes complaints data in Service Canada's annual report, as well as conducting customer satisfaction surveys. The results from these surveys show that the overall level of client satisfaction remains high at 83 percent and is widespread across many aspects of service delivery, specific programs and services, service channels and client groups.

In Singapore, the Central Provident Fund Board offers an online feedback web page for people to register any complaints, dissatisfactions or instances where they seek redress. Their director of Customer Relations, Hock Keong Ng, explained, "So that is a commitment from us that they will get a response to their complaints within two working days if they come through the e-platform. If they choose to use hard copy, come to us via snail mail, our service level is four working days. The different service standards also help to push e-services even in the area of complaints management. In most cases what we do is that we try to turn the complaint into something positive. A positive outcome for the customer is the desired outcome for any customer service officer. CPF does 40 million transactions a year. So there are bound to be human mistakes. There are bound to be some service lapses. But what is important is how we manage the service lapses, how we do service recovery and how can we move forward to delight the customers and to maintain high customer satisfaction. I think that is the key of a good customer service-oriented organization or customer-centric organization."

People, in their role as customers, citizens and taxpayers, are clearly demanding more transparency and

accountability from government in terms of the information that is made available to them. They are also seeking consistent and accessible means to remedy problems with the government when they occur. Through our research, we have found many examples where governments are responding to this need. Much progress has been made in making the right types of information available to the public—in terms of transparency of services and results achieved—and in providing mechanisms for public recourse when problems do arise.

Recommendations

- **Explore possibilities for enhancing the use of existing publicly available data to help customers make better choices about their use of services.** Governments should make good use of new technologies, such as Web 2.0, to provide innovative ways of making information more relevant and accessible to citizens. By harnessing the "power of the crowd," governments can find innovative solutions to pressing social issues and improve people's ability to contribute to their community.
- **Implement customer relationship management systems to improve the transparency of the service delivery process.** This includes enabling people to track the status of their service requests and find out whether their service needs are being adequately met.
- **Organize performance information around desired outcomes that reflect customer or community concerns, not around departmental or agency structures.** People are less concerned with operational metrics (such as inputs, processes or outputs) than they are with knowing how well the government is actually meeting the needs of the community and improving their quality of life. Outcomes, however, are affected by different agencies and it is important to reflect this in accounting for results. Governments must take a holistic approach to measurement, by looking beyond departmental boundaries. To generate ideas on appropriate indicators and to help collect data, governments should consider cultivating collaborations with other stakeholders (or instance, citizen groups and non-profits). It is also important to balance the use of internal performance management data with input from citizens via surveys and focus groups to provide an "outside in" and "inside out" view of performance.
- **Determine what types of accountability information to share with the public and the best vehicle for disseminating the information.** Design reports in a "customer-friendly" way—using plain language that people understand. The reports should include

quantitative and qualitative information, highlighting accomplishments and examples of improvements in the results achieved. They should also provide comparable benchmarks, such as what is being achieved in other places, and enable people to compare performance over time. Explore ways to make the information more easily accessible, for example, through Web-based reporting, to keep citizens informed on a timely basis.

- **Ensure the visibility, transparency, accessibility and responsiveness of complaints procedures.** This means making the process as simple and convenient as possible, and consistent between organizations. Consider providing a single point of information on complaints processes, or even a single point of access. Strive to resolve complaints in a timely and effective manner, ensuring complaints get resolved at the lowest possible level of the "ladder of redress."
- **Incorporate learning from performance feedback and complaints processes into management decision making and build in improvements to the planning and delivery of services.** The provision of performance information should be complemented by the creation of "feedback loops" from citizens back to the government. Incorporate citizens' feedback into decision making and government policies, and adjust programs and services accordingly, to improve future results. Monitor and analyze data from complaints and use this information to identify and address systemic problems and improve services. Performance management then becomes a continuous learning cycle of measurement, reporting, assessment, planning, decision making and implementation.

Conclusion

Governments are entering a new phase on their journeys toward leadership in customer service. They have already made a bold promise to citizens that they would fundamentally change the nature of people's interactions with government by structuring and delivering services in an entirely new, citizen-centric way. In making this promise, their intention has been to use customer service as a lever for achieving high performance and delivering greater public service value—that is, providing better social outcomes in a cost-effective manner.

However, evidence from this year's *Leadership in Customer Service* citizen survey, supported by findings from the *Global Cities Forum* research, suggests that governments are not yet fully delivering on this promise. We have shown that, in most of the countries we surveyed, a majority of people do not rate their government highly in terms of its ability to fulfill its key mission: to deliver customer-friendly services that contribute to a better quality of life for the people they serve.

This year, through our research, we have sought to understand better how the true potential of customer service can be

realized to deliver genuinely improved, citizen-centric public services, which have a real impact on the quality of people's lives. We have seen leaders in customer service move beyond a focus on the quality of the service transaction, toward a relationship with citizens that fosters deeper trust, improves the relevance and transparency of government decision-making, service design and delivery, and encourages a "co-productive" relationship based on shared responsibility.

Our research has helped us identify four enabling practices that we believe can help government organizations move toward the next level of leadership in customer service. We have also uncovered some excellent examples of leading governments that are already embracing these practices.

First, governments must offer flexible, differentiated services that respond to different circumstances, needs and preferences of diverse customer groups and individuals. To enable this, governments must understand their customer base better by undertaking detailed needs-based customer segmentation studies and using these to inform the design of services, channel

strategies and tailored communications. Importantly, they must use this understanding to target services—and therefore resources—appropriately, ensuring that those who have the greatest need receive the most help and those who are most able to help themselves have the opportunities and means to do so. This will help governments tackle the difficult balance between the desirability of offering people choices and personalized services and the necessity of achieving more equal and universal social outcomes cost-effectively.

Second, governments should actively engage customers, citizens and other stakeholders on an ongoing basis to help define outcomes and design services that address the issues people feel are most important. We learned that people want to play a part in deciding or at least influencing government priorities and helping plan and design services that meet their specific needs and preferences. For their part, governments are finding new ways—with their customers, community groups, businesses and other stakeholders—to deliberate upon and jointly develop policies and solutions to pressing social, economic, and community

issues. But, having taken steps to encourage greater participation, government must make sure they "close the loop," so that people who have given their time and engaged on service issues know that their contribution has been heard and acted upon.

Third, in order to be truly customer-centric and to address people's cross-cutting needs, government agencies must recognize the benefits of working outside of their traditional boundaries by harnessing the experience and resources of a wider network of service providers. This means joining forces with other public service organizations, non-profits, community groups, private businesses and even citizens themselves. It requires good coordination, collaboration and the integration of policies, program design and service delivery, so that the needs of the people—rather than those of policymakers and public managers—will drive government activities. This is a challenging goal, which requires many factors to be in place: strong leadership; organizational changes; new governance and accountability structures; cultural shifts; and reengineered systems and processes. It is only in this way that

government organizations can achieve the complex social outcomes that address people's needs holistically alongside the needs of society in general.

Finally, if they are to build trust and encourage co-production, governments must become more transparent and accountable. Citizens need to feel better informed, not just about the services their government is providing, but also about how well the government is performing in achieving outcomes—the actual results that show how the quality of life is improving. Furthermore, governments should provide greater visibility and give customers more control of the customer-service process, for example, by allowing service requests to be tracked online. If things do go wrong, governments have to make it possible for people to voice their views, concerns and complaints. Where issues arise, it is the ability to identify and resolve these effectively that has the most significant impact on customers' perception of services and trust in the government. Easily accessible and transparent ways of raising and following up on complaints are therefore vital, and governments must also demonstrate that they are ready to learn from these

complaints and to identify and resolve systemic issues.

Clearly, these are complex and challenging aspirations, which will take time for governments to put into practice. They are, however, critical steps on the journey toward high performance. A failure to take these steps will, over time, erode people's confidence in their government and lead to disenchantment, cynicism and poor public service.

By implementing the four enabling practices we have discussed in this report, governments will be better positioned to achieve true leadership in customer service. We will witness the increasingly active involvement of citizens and other stakeholders in identifying priorities, influencing decision-making, shaping policies, designing services, holding governments to account for their results and even jointly contributing to service delivery. As they make this happen, governments will find themselves better placed to deliver improved services and social outcomes that address people's whole life needs, thereby building genuine trust among their customers and citizens.



Case Studies



Case Study 1

Central Provident Fund Board Enabling Singaporeans to Enjoy a Secure Retirement

Singapore's Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board is a comprehensive national social security savings plan. It not only provides savings plans for retirement, but also for home ownership, health care and more. CPF currently has around 3.2 million members, of whom around 1.6 million are actively contributing to their plans.

The mission of the CPF Board is "to enable Singaporeans to save for a secure retirement," while its vision is to be "a world-class social security organization providing the best national savings scheme for Singaporeans to enjoy a secure retirement."

By its very nature, the organization has a broad and diverse customer base. Exemplifying a cradle-to-grave relationship, it serves customers of all ages—from the very young to the very old. It serves all sectors of society; from the affluent to the poor. One of the CPF Board's key challenges, therefore, is to differentiate its services to meet the diverse needs of all its customers and to engage and adequately serve all sections of society. On the other hand, it also has a duty to be cost-

efficient, streamlining its processes as far as possible to ensure efficient and effective service.

One of the main ways in which the CPF Board is addressing these challenges is by moving all of its transactions and as many of its services as possible onto the online channel, to streamline service delivery as well as make services more accessible and convenient. As we mentioned in last year's study, the CPF Board has implemented a range of methods for those without Internet access or skills to access their services. The organization has introduced 'e-counters'—assisted kiosks in walk-in government offices—to provide online services to those who do not have their own Internet access or who require help to complete transactions. It also employs mobile customer service officers, or 'm-ambassadors' as they are called, to reach elderly or house-bound people. The m-ambassadors may visit people in their homes, if they have contacted the call center to report difficulties they are facing, or if the CPF Board has identified them as being eligible for payments that they have not claimed. The m-ambassadors also

hold community road shows to educate customers and give them the opportunity to use the assisted e-service.

The CPF Board has been very successful in moving its customers to the electronic channel. Last year, we reported that it had closed 50 percent of its face-to-face service counters; since then, the CPF Board has continued this process, driving more users to electronic channels. Last year, 39 million of the total 41 million transactions were conducted via the Internet. Given that mobile penetration is very high in Singapore, the CPF Board has also increased the number of services available via the mobile channel through the short message service (SMS) and mobile Internet. As of May 2008—just 15 months after implementation—the mobile service had 44,000 subscribers.

The organization has achieved significant operational cost savings by moving to online self-service and electronic processing. The average cost per e-transaction has been reduced from USD 0.56 in 2003 (just after launch) to USD 0.11 currently—this is in comparison to USD 15 per transaction via the previous counter service. These savings

have been channeled into improving electronic services, which translates into better customer experience reflected in improved customer satisfaction ratings for the e-services (from 74 percent in 2003 to 93 percent in 2007).

Among the investments in e-service improvement is the recent implementation of a customer relationship management (CRM) system. This system has allowed the CPF Board to collect profile information to build a holistic view of customers, including their transaction history. The benefits to customers are several. They do not need to re-enter data each time they use the system. They can personalize their view of the CPF webpage, so that it only shows information that is relevant to them. CPF Board can send them personalized messages as well; for example, informing them about service improvements or reminding them about key dates and deadlines. They can receive personalized alerts, either on the portal or via email or SMS, triggered by certain events. These events include employers' monthly contributions or CPF payments being made, or warning them that their balance is running low.

As CPF Board's Chief Information Officer, Swee Hua Tan told Accenture: "We now have a complete view of the customer, in the sense that we know the customer and how he has been interacting with us, what he has been asking. So it's a holistic view of the customer."

Another recent innovation has been the introduction of the "My e-Concierge" tool, which is an attempt to organize services around the needs of the customer. Once customers have logged in and been authenticated online, My e-Concierge allows them to request a service simply by entering their free-text request (rather than filling in a form) as the CRM system will already have all their customer data. The key advantage is that customers, at the outset, do not have to know where a particular service or transaction is located on the website in order to access that service.

The development and deployment of enabling IT systems and services have also meant that CPF Board is better able to connect and share data with other agencies. It currently works with around 10 ministries or agencies to collect accurate, up-to-date information about

the eligible Singapore population for a nationwide project. For example, it obtains data from the Ministry of Home Affairs on the identities of all eligible Singaporeans aged 21 and above; from the Income Tax Authority on the annual income of its members, their housing status (whether in public or private housing) and citizens' tax arrears; and from the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Home Affairs about whether a citizen is an active service person or a service veteran. Again, this means that customers do not have to provide this information themselves.

This data sharing means that CPF Board can proactively offer tailored services based on individuals' status or circumstances. For example, it knows which of its members are in care homes or in prison and may have difficulty getting access to payments for which they are eligible. It can then make special arrangements to ensure that these people receive their payments in a timely fashion. CPF Board's electronic connection with the National Registry of Marriages means it is notified whenever people marry and can therefore contact newlyweds to remind them to re-nominate their CPF account beneficiaries.

CPF Board also provides services on behalf of other government agencies; for example, disbursing tax offset payments on behalf of the Ministry of Finance. CPF Board is particularly well placed to fulfill this role, as it has the comprehensive database of eligible citizens and effective mechanisms to make the payments. The eligible citizens only have to register and nominate a bank account. Ninety-six percent of eligible citizens registered for the most recent round of disbursements. Of them, 90 percent registered online—either via the Web or using bank ATMs.

The CRM system has improved the level of transparency of CPF Board's services. A customer submitting an online transaction can now track its progress via the website. CPF Board has very clear service standards regarding transaction processing times and it is easy for customers to see if those deadlines have been exceeded. This transparency empowers customers and puts greater pressure on the service provider to meet its promises. The organization has also discovered that transparency

in transaction processes and its rules and obligations results in greater levels of compliance. For example, now that employees can track their CPF contributions and payments in real time, they can complain online to CPF Board if their employer does not pay their monthly contribution on time.

In the area of complaints management too, CPF Board is promoting the uptake of e-services. It invites feedback online, through a dedicated webpage, or via email directly to the officer responsible (a contact list is published on its website). In its service level agreement, CPF Board commits itself to respond to any electronic complaints within two working days, but only within four days for hard copy complaints.

In fact, the organization takes a very positive and proactive view of complaints. As Hock Keong Ng, director of Customer Relations at CPF Board explains, "(We handle) 40 million transactions a year. There are bound to be human mistakes. There are bound to be some service lapses. But what is important is how do we manage the service lapse and how do we do service recovery. How can we move forward to delight the customers and to maintain the high customer satisfaction? I think that is the key of a good customer service-oriented organization or customer-centric organization."

The organization conducts an annual survey to gather members' and employers' feedback on services via all channels. In 2007, survey results showed that 98.8 percent of members and 97.8 percent of employers were either very satisfied or satisfied with overall services.

Finally, in addition to transactional service delivery, another important role of the CPF Board is to engage and educate citizens about the importance of saving adequately for a financially secure retirement. The organization has therefore been investing in new ways to reach and engage citizens—particularly children, teens and students—to educate them about financial responsibility. CPF Board has created a number of online tools and calculators to help citizens make better-informed investment decisions, together with an online discussion forum to help provide financial planning advice. As we mentioned last year, the agency has used

some highly creative ways of engaging young Singaporeans using interactive games and competitions, adding more and more multi-media content to its website and even looking at using virtual worlds to get their messages across.

All of CPF Board's efforts are to put its customers' needs at the center of everything it does. It engages with citizens to understand their needs and concerns; provides differentiated services to meet the diverse array of needs and preferences; collaborates with other organizations behind the scenes to deliver a joined-up service; and strives toward greater transparency and accountability—all these efforts add up to making the organization a true leader in customer service.

Key Lessons

- One size truly does not fit all. It is critical to know your customers, their range of needs and requirements and tailor services and communications strategies to suit target groups. CPF Board has been extremely creative about finding ways to engage and serve its diverse customer base effectively, particularly the very young.

- A comprehensive "stick and carrot" approach to encourage usage of online services can be highly effective. Withdrawing access to offline channels clearly creates a very strong incentive for online adoption; however, providing alternative, assisted means of accessing online services is essential to ensure that some people are not left out. Offering more favorable service levels for those transacting online encourages adoption, while reinvesting operational savings in making e-services as good as they can be ensures levels of customer satisfaction remain high.

- Increasing transparency of transactions can bring very positive impacts, such as improving customer engagement, trust in the organization and compliance. It can also result in reduced volumes of telephone/face-to-face enquiries about transaction status. However, it also raises customers' expectations of process efficiency and puts greater pressure on the government organization to deliver on the promise. How an organization responds to and resolves customers' issues and complaints when they arise is a critically important element of customer service. Organizations need to take action to ensure that the organizational culture and systems provide the necessary support to transform the customer experience from one of likely frustration to one of delight.



Case Study 2

Communities for Children A New Community-based Model for Improving Outcomes for Children in Australia

The previous Australian Government first announced its National Agenda for Early Childhood (NAEC) in 2002 (now superseded by the present government's Early Childhood Development Strategy). The agenda was created in response to evidence that the seeds for poor outcomes—like welfare dependency, school failure, poor health, substance misuse and criminal behavior—are usually planted in a child's early years, and that effective early interventions that support very young children, their families and the wider community, can help ameliorate risks and improve life outcomes. The agenda took into account the need for a more collaborative approach to early childhood investment. Many initiatives related to early childhood were being provided, mainly by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups, with funding and support coming from the three tiers of government (federal, state and local). However, the effectiveness of these initiatives was impacted by a need for better coordination and collaboration between funding bodies, administrators and service providers.

Informed initially by other successful, place-based approaches to policy making, program management and service delivery—such as the United Kingdom's SureStart program—and in consultation with community and early childhood experts, the Australian government identified four key action areas for the NAEC: healthy families with young children; early learning and care; child-friendly communities; and supporting families and parenting.

In April 2004, the government announced its four-year, AUD 142 million 'Communities for Children' initiative, under the auspices of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). The initiative aimed to achieve better outcomes for children aged 0 to 5 in disadvantaged communities by targeting the four outcome areas of the NAEC and focusing on sustainability and capacity-building in services that support children and their families in those communities. The program was designed from the start to be highly flexible and adaptable to the different needs and circumstances of different communities across Australia.

Communities for Children sites were identified on the basis of a range of indicators including having at least 10 percent of the population under the age of five and a high level of socio-economic disadvantage. Communities were tasked to develop a four-year strategic plan setting out how outcomes for children would be improved in each of the four areas of the NAEC framework. Communities also had to demonstrate how they would achieve a fifth outcome area of bringing family and children's services together to work effectively as a system, ensuring broad representation of stakeholders in the community and building strong links between those stakeholders.

Evan Lewis, group manager of the Mental Health, Autism and Community Support Group and former branch manager of the Early Childhood and Communities Branch FaHCSIA, explained: "We were trying a new way of doing business that was premised on giving, within a flexible framework, as much latitude as possible to a community to come up with innovative ideas about the kind of issues we wanted to address in the early childhood space."

In each participating community, the initiative is driven by a lead NGO, or "facilitating partner," on behalf of a consortium of other community groups including national and/or local NGOs. The lead NGO oversees broad community consultation through a Communities for Children Committee. The committee comprises community members who are dedicated to the principles of the initiative and achieving positive outcomes for children, families and their community. Members include parents and community leaders, as well as representatives from the business, research, academic and non-government sectors. State/territory and local governments are involved in an advisory capacity and promote cross-government links.

The committee is the key decision maker. It considers the particular issues and characteristics of its community and tailors social policy interventions and service delivery mechanisms accordingly. The committee develops the four-year strategic plan and supports its implementation. It also manages the disbursement of funds to deliver activities identified in the plan. The facilitating partner is responsible for engaging and coordinating the efforts of service providers and community groups, as well as for collecting and reporting evidence about progress and impact on outcomes.

Evan Lewis told Accenture that it was a new concept and there were some "teething problems." Some of the communities, unless they had strong NGO leadership, found it very difficult, without a degree of assistance, to draw up strategic plans and put in place the governance arrangements to manage the funding. Gordon McCormick, branch manager of Community Program Frameworks Branch (FaHCSIA) and formerly a senior manager of the Communities for Children initiative, found similar issues at the beginning: "There is a wide range of expertise within the organizations that were operating in these communities. Some of them haven't been through any sort of a sophisticated process identifying indicators and outcomes and having a firm idea of what was achievable and what wasn't. So there was a bit of work

(involved in) coming up with a realistic plan that could be achieved and there was a fair amount of time spent in the actual planning, to ensure that everyone was very clear about the outcomes that were being achieved. That also brought the benefit of engaging the community in that discussion so, in the end, the plan that was approved by the department had the full buy-in of the community."

The program established a variety of mechanisms for ensuring strong governance and accountability as well as forums for sharing experiences, best practices and lessons learned. There was a mandatory evaluation element to each strategy, with a proportion of the funding allocated to each community set aside for evaluation and reporting. The NGOs had to work together to agree on and gather evidence to satisfy the evaluation criteria, which had a beneficial effect of increasing collaboration. There was also a separate national-level external evaluation, conducted in partnership with the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), to monitor and evaluate the relative impact of the programs over time.

Regular national and state-level Communities for Children forums, attended by an appointed representative from each facilitating partner organization, provided the opportunity to share experiences and learning. These representatives would report on the progress on their activities and also discuss and resolve together issues related to data collection and reporting. The department also created a dedicated portal for the initiative, giving each community access to a projects database, case studies and examples of best practice, as well as a means for connecting with other participating communities.

The government executives responsible for developing, implementing and managing Communities for Children engaged the community right from the outset, even in the definition of the funding model. The executives collaborated with some of the largest NGOs in the sphere of children and families to develop the model; a process that included defining the outcomes, the criteria for participation and the funding

process. They also held open public consultations in every state and territory in Australia, to talk about the model and give communities a chance to shape the structure of the program. Several thousand people attended these sessions, which provided valuable ideas to shape the model and helped build ownership of the model within the community.

Evan Lewis said, "I remember chairing every single one of those meetings and knowing that thousands of people turned up overall. They gave us some really good ideas about how we would structure it, and I think part of the success... (was) that that public process engendered a huge amount of goodwill and commitment to trying something new. And we definitely listened and fine-tuned our policy settings around that feedback."

Given that the Communities for Children initiative has long-term outcomes—i.e., improving the long-term social and economic outcomes for people through early-childhood interventions—it is too early to measure success against those objectives. It will take several years for long-term outcomes—including educational outcomes and reductions in crime and substance misuse—to be realized. However, it is possible to look at some short-term indicators and say that the initiative is having a positive impact on children in participating communities; for example, improved rates of breastfeeding and reduced incidence of infant illness or admissions to hospital. In addition to monitoring results over the longer term, the Institute of Family Studies evaluation intends to report on some of these shorter-term indicators, comparing communities that implemented similar strategies to those with very different strategies, as well as comparing against indicators in communities that have had no Communities for Children interventions.

Early learnings, however, do indicate that such a place-based, community-owned approach is an effective model, which could potentially be adopted for the whole community, not just in the early childhood area.

Key Lessons

- Involving NGOs and the wider community in the upfront design of the program helped ensure a good fit with, and buy-in from, the non-government sector and communities themselves.
- Defining high-level outcome areas and ensuring that any proposed strategies would be able to demonstrate measurable improvement against those outcomes give the initiative focus and accountability, while allowing communities the freedom to choose flexible and innovative responses, according to local needs.
- Defining criteria for disadvantage appropriately meant that funding and support were allocated where they could really make a difference.
- In a bottom-up, community-led approach, program managers need to offer ample support to lead NGOs or community groups and include mechanisms for sharing experiences and learning. Some organizations may need training and guidance in areas, such as financial management or the process of running meetings and making collective decisions.

Case Study 3

Department for Work and Pensions Placing the Customer at the Heart of Pensions Transformation

The United Kingdom's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provides social benefits to UK citizens in the Working Age, Pensions, Child and Disability customer groups. The Pension Service is a dedicated service within DWP for current and future pensioners. In partnership with other organizations, it provides state financial support to more than 11 million pensioners, delivered at a national and local level. It also helps people plan and provide for retirement.

The ongoing Pension Transformation Programme, launched in 2004, plays a central role in helping the UK government deliver customer-centric services to pensioners, while providing a more cost-efficient customer service operation.

At the start of the transformation, the Pension Service had 26 pension centers. Business processes and information technology systems were fragmented, largely paper-based, designed around individual benefits and susceptible to fraud and error. The overall objective of the transformation is to change the service into an organization that has the customer at the forefront of

everything it does, ensuring it focuses on their needs and provides an all-round improved service.

The specific business objectives of the transformation are:

- To increase the take-up of pensioner entitlements and reduce poverty, by delivering benefits to all those entitled and especially those most in need.
- To improve customer service by removing duplication of data collection, reducing customer hand-offs between staff and empowering staff to deal with as many issues as possible during a single call.
- To use less invasive means-testing, to support the delivery of improved customer service and increase take up.
- To improve the productivity and efficiency of the service provided to customers.

To achieve these objectives, the Pension Service is working to eliminate paper from its processes, consolidating the delivery of its services into a smaller number of contact centers

and introducing a new organizational structure, business processes and information technology. The new contact centers will allow customers to interact with DWP through multiple channels including mail and phone (currently available), with future plans to enable local/field service and Internet channels.

The contact centers are complemented by a local service network, operating in partnership with local authorities and voluntary organizations, which engages with vulnerable customers, offering home visits or appointments at a location convenient to them.

Pension services have been moved to the new contact centers in waves: first, all new State Pension applications, and then all Pension Credit applications. The ability to process changes of existing customers' circumstances was the last to be transitioned to the new environment. Document scanning and management is being piloted from November 2008. This will allow the Pension Service to stop using paper for its internal processes and fully integrate paper-based and face-to-face customer interactions with the phone channel.

The Pension Service has built a central database of customer information called the Customer Information System (CIS), which has become one of the largest Oracle databases in Europe, with customer data on more than 65 million UK citizens. CIS is now being used across other government departments, subject to appropriate data restrictions, and is helping coordinate government interaction with citizens for the provision of benefits and related services. The service has also implemented a Siebel-based Customer Account Management (CAM) system, which is one of the largest case management systems ever implemented by a government organization. The system links together the CIS, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) services, State Pension services, Pension Credit benefit systems and the Job Seekers Allowance system.

By integrating its legacy systems and creating interfaces with those of other departments, such as the HMRC, the Pension Service is able to view a comprehensive history of each customer's benefits and contributions across departments and systems. This enables the contact center staff to provide more complete and efficient customer service, with reduced need to hand customers over to different departments for different benefits. It also gives the front-line staff a clearer view of the range of benefits the customer is claiming and entitled to, allowing them to identify additional benefits that customers may be entitled to receive, without the need to ask repeatedly for the personal and financial information required for means-testing. By linking its systems with those of HMRC, the Pension Service is also able to provide customers planning for retirement with a personal state pension calculation by accessing HMRC contribution data.

With the completion of the national rollout of its first wave of transformation in October 2006, the Pension Service can now allow customers to complete the combined State Pension and Pension Credit application process in a single telephone call. Those entitled to Pension Credit can also apply for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit during the same call.

The next stage of the Pension Transformation Programme will include

support via the Customer Account Management system for local service teams. The changes will help these teams provide a more holistic service through home visits, considering older people's needs as a whole. For example, when visiting customers in their homes, local service representatives can offer full "benefit health-checks," as well as assess other needs, such as help with the garden or having a smoke alarm fitted.

Pensions transformation and reform in the United Kingdom is ongoing. One of the major plans for the future is to introduce personal accounts as a form of national pensions savings scheme (which would provide employer and employee pensions contributions) to allow those, who would not normally have access to a pension, a means of saving for their retirement. Unlike existing pension schemes, a personal account would be portable and consistent throughout the saver's working life.

Key Lessons

- A large change effort is more likely to succeed if it is subdivided and delivered in logical, discrete segments of business functionality. The Pension Transformation Programme has been able to learn lessons and demonstrate success with each specific area of its business before progressing to the next level of change. This is one of several ways that the programme has followed the principle of "prove before you move." The Pension Transformation Programme has also used parallel live IT environments and deployment to "pathfinder" business units to prove and understand combined IT and operating model changes before rolling them out fully within the organization.
- Change programs must balance forward momentum with the time needed for adoption between each wave of change. Large-scale changes to business operations can take a year or more to be fully adopted and realize benefits. The delivery program must maintain momentum to keep delivery channels efficient and overcome people's natural resistance to change, ever mindful of the capacity of operational environments to take on change while continuing to deliver services to the customer.
- Improving efficiency can often go hand-in-hand with improving quality of service. An integrated view of the customer will improve the customer experience while minimizing the duplication of work and hand-offs within the business; at the same time allowing for improved controls on fraud and error. Likewise, moving paper work onto telephony channels and automating the distribution of paper that remains in the process speeds up customer service and reduces the number of separate interactions required with the customer for each transaction.

The Pension Transformation Programme plays a central role in helping the UK government deliver customer-centric services to pensioners, while providing a more cost-efficient customer service operation.



Case Study 4

Kent Gateway

Cross-sector Partnering to Improve Access to Services

The 2006 white paper on service transformation, produced by Sir David Varney, highlighted the many problems created by the siloed nature of government service delivery in the United Kingdom; not least the difficulties people face in getting answers to their complex, cross-cutting problems. Kent County Council (KCC) is seeking to address these problems through the creation of Gateway—an innovative new concept that is revolutionizing the way that public services are delivered to the community.

Gateway is the brainchild of the chief executive officer of Kent County Council, Peter Gilroy, who conceived the idea during his days as director of Social Services at KCC. Gateway was developed in partnership with the Kent public sector. Recognizing that people are less concerned with who provides the service and more about ease of access, he initiated the Gateway project to bring together a range of services from more than 30 agencies and service delivery partners, covering central and local government and the voluntary sector, through a town center shop

front location. By delivering services in this way, Gateway eliminates the need for people to contact numerous government agencies, making services as easy and convenient as possible for citizens. Gateway also aims to remove the stigma for people in accessing certain services. Furthermore, Gateway complements other traditional methods of accessing local government services and information, such as the Internet, telephone and home visits.

Gateway has taken the concept of the one-stop shop a step further. Its offerings go beyond the ability to conduct multiple transactions during one visit. At Gateway, people with more complex needs will find expert professional advice to help process their requirements quickly and efficiently. As Tanya Oliver, director of Strategic Development and Public Access, explained: "This is much wider (than a traditional one-stop shop). It deals with not just the 80 percent 'one and done' services and issues, but the 20 percent of very complex enquiries as well." Gateway is able to cater to multiple requirements by enabling cross-referral and inter-agency contact between

customer service advisers (CSAs), officers and service planners, helping to ensure that they can deliver the best possible results within the minimum time.

The Ashford Gateway is capable of referring visitors to 317 charitable organizations, and this number is growing. Looking to the future, there are plans to extend services to include private-sector partners, such as pharmacies, to broaden the range and depth of services available on the site.

With initial funding of GBP 1 million from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and GBP 220,000 from KCC, the first Gateway was launched in Ashford in September 2005 through a partnership among Ashford Borough Council, the National Health Service (NHS), police and fire departments, as well as the voluntary sector. The success of Ashford Gateway has led to the expansion of the project to other sites, as well as the broadening of the range of services offered at each location.

The Thanet Gateway opened in January 2008 and KCC plans to open three more before the end of December 2008, and

16 in total by 2012. In addition, three mobile Gateways are planned, bringing services to the people who cannot easily get into town centers. In the future, as Gateway rolls out across other districts in Kent, the organizations involved will share the costs between them; with each organization's contribution being proportionate to its level of presence.

Gateway has four main service lines available through different locations:

- Information and self help including free Internet access, a service directory and a payment kiosk.
- Routine advice and transactions including bus passes, refuse, parking and licensing services. Routine transactions can be carried out through on-site kiosks.
- Regular "surgeries" by agencies responsible for local service provision including workshops and support groups (for example, substance abuse and alcohol dependency groups, domestic violence forums, health check-ups).
- Cross-agency services including council tax, benefits, planning, housing, library, and adult education through Skills Plus. Trained professional customer service advisers are able to give higher-level advice on areas that are specific to individual needs, resolving cases that are more complex.

Gateway has also recently established a panel of 40 people that acts as a reference group for new or emerging services as well as provides ideas for service development and improvements.

Twelve fundamental management principles govern the successful implementation of the Gateway concept, based on the learning from the creation of the Ashford Gateway. Among the most important principles are:

- **Partnership structure:** Each Gateway center will be a collaborative enterprise with Kent Council and other agencies providing funding according to their use and representation at the facility.
- **Service offerings:** Gateways will combine the offerings of four groups (central government, local government, the voluntary sector and selected private-sector providers) provided through the four service lines outlined above.

- **Operational management per location:** An Operational Board is in place for each Gateway, with all partners represented. The Board's responsibilities include negotiating with potential new partners, managing customer satisfaction surveys and ensuring management principles are adhered to.

- **Gateway Strategy Advisory (GSA) Board:** The GSA Board oversees overall direction, strategy and performance of all Gateway operations, and manages cross-cutting issues, such as IT and training. The Board is chaired by the CEO of Kent County Council and includes representatives from district councils and the other agencies involved within the Gateway structure. It helps ensure that management principles work well and prioritizes the locations for the rollout of Gateway.

- **Common customer records:** In order to capture the total customer experience—and prevent people from having to provide the same information more than once—the Gateway project will use a standardized system that will capture short case histories and other data. The aim is to develop a common customer relationship management (CRM) system to manage cases and referrals, which respects the need for organizations to have their own discrete CRM systems that will manage the detail of the transaction separately. Customer service advisers will be able to access customers' records and pull out top-level information while respecting data protection requirements and protocols.

- **Performance indicators:** All Gateways will conform to a common set of agreed upon performance indicators. The preliminary list includes: depth and breadth of services; availability of brief case histories for all complex multi-agency customers; cross-agency transactions as a percentage of total transactions; the number of customer journeys taken to complete a request; time-per-case handling; self-help as a percentage of total transactions; reduction in office estate; and turnaround time to implement customer feedback.

- **IT capabilities:** Gateway centers will have a common foundation of IT architecture, which enables agencies and citizens to work effectively from each location. This architecture also provides the capability to help customers with hearing difficulties with video interpreting and running streaming web TV (such as Kent TV) and video conferencing alongside wireless and wired networking.

Just two years after the launch, the Gateway initiative has already had a powerful impact on the local community. Recent customer feedback figures for the Thanet Gateway show a very high satisfaction rating with staff (94.3 percent) and with the outcome of the visit (87.6 percent). Even if people do not get the answer they want, their satisfaction with the overall customer experience is high. Consultation will be carried out every quarter to continually measure levels of public satisfaction with the service provided at the Thanet Gateway. This regular consultation is required as part of the service plan for customer services. Results are fed back to Gateway, the district council and other stakeholders, as well as the public online. Press releases help take the results to local media. Improvements to Gateway services are to be made based on feedback and a "You said ... we did" notice board is to be placed in Gateway locations so that customers can see the changes that have been made in response to their comments and suggestions. In this manner, Gateway is demonstrating a high level of transparency and accountability for its results.

Gateway has had other "knock on" effects on the local economy. The Skills Plus service offers adult learners the opportunity to improve skills in English, mathematics and computing. Research was conducted to measure the social return on investment of this service in the Ashford Gateway based on the learning and employment outcomes of customers. It found that, for every pound invested in this service in Ashford, there is a return of GBP 13 (for example, through savings in benefit payments and increased employment). This success is attributed to Gateway and partners, as they have managed to attract people the local council would not normally have reached.

There are other benefits relating to the cost-effective operation of the council. For example, KCC is looking at its overall office strategy to reduce the number of buildings needed by encouraging more work-from-home options for staff. Gateway plays an important role in this strategy, since it enables the council to retain front office, physical access points while removing other high-cost, town center offices.

Delivering improved outcomes for citizens: an example from the front line

Mary poked her head around my office door as she was struggling to talk on the direct telephone link to the Borough Council. She was a lady senior in years and had suffered a stroke that had affected her speech quite badly. Mary confided in me that the bank would not let her withdraw her benefits because she could not provide a photo identification (ID) document, such as a driver's license or passport. She had been asked curtly to go and get one made.

I spoke to the Borough Council on her behalf and began by sorting out what was quite a simple matter—her name had been incorrectly spelled on her bus pass. The new bus pass was ordered and put in the post that day. I spoke to a colleague about photo IDs and found out about application forms for the European Union (EU) and National ID cards that banks would accept. Gateway customer service advisers assisted Mary with online applications for these cards.

They then contacted Citizen Rights for Older People (CROP), who felt that the bank was breaking the law through anti-discriminatory practices. They are only allowed to ask for a 'reasonable' ID, and in the case of elderly people, this did not have to include photo ID, passport or driver's license. The customer service advisers arranged for a meeting between Mary and the CROP, whose representatives would visit her at home. They even offered to accompany Mary to the bank.

Mary then mentioned her problems with accessing her money in general and her lack of independence. She was referred to the Social Services Care Assessment team in the Gateway. After the investigation was completed, Mary was referred to the Adult Services Team to assist with her difficulties following her stroke, as well as to the Supporting People Team to help her gain more independence with daily living tasks and to ensure the provision of any other support, if required.

Mary is one person, but with more than half a million customers benefiting from services delivered by Gateway partners, there are many case stories that illustrate the tremendous service improvement that Gateway offers.

Key Lessons

- The importance of local partnerships—both within and outside of government—underpinned by a high level of mutual trust, cannot be underestimated. Gateway has only been made possible by all partners coming together and buying into joint delivery, which is tailored to meet local customer needs. However, it is important that the partnerships are continually reviewed, and regular assessments undertaken to monitor how well the model is working.
- If Kent is going to establish Gateway as their frontline method of service access, then the establishment of a recognizable brand is particularly important. The elements of the brand are transferable and scalable, allowing KCC to extend the brand into larger operational sites or adapt it to future delivery models, such as mobile services. The neutrality of the site and branding (as well as the lack of official KCC branding) has made the delivery model more attractive to third-sector organizations, who may wish to get involved with the project.
- Bringing staff on board and addressing cultural issues that come with getting people from different organizations to work together is also critical. It was initially difficult for staff from different organizations to sign up to the new brand and let go of their own identities. A significant cultural change was required to adapt to the working practices of the new environment. A strong emphasis was placed on multi-skilling, knowledge pooling and rotation of staff between posts to provide each individual with deeper knowledge of the new organization and the wide range of services available. In particular, this exercise enables customer service agents to deal with all kinds of inquiries and make referrals where necessary.



Case Study 5

New York City

Better Government Through Customer Service

In the last five years, the New York City government has committed itself to creating a customer-centric environment that emphasizes three key strategic goals for the city: accessibility, transparency and accountability. The government has developed a set of business strategies in support of these goals. Cross-agency in nature, the strategies are aligned to the six areas of the city's mission: economic development and sustainability, public safety, social services, education, community services and city infrastructure. Overarching these strategies is an additional goal of creating a citywide focus on improving customer service. The strategies have helped drive unprecedented collaboration between city agencies and their stakeholders, and have already achieved a great deal.

To help make city services more accessible, the government developed the 3-1-1 service in 2003, transforming the way services and information were provided to New York City residents, commuters and visitors. From the start, 3-1-1 was a "virtual" agency, providing "one-stop shopping" for government services through a call center. Today,

city residents can call 3-1-1 at any time and speak with a customer service representative to assist them with a wide range of service requests in almost 180 languages. These services include: providing information about local government phone numbers, addresses and office hours; responding to requests for information about specific processes or publications; taking action on requests for a whole gamut of services, ranging from the repair of potholes and broken street lights as well as issuance of birth certificates; and reporting on quality of life issues or complaints about New York City government agencies.

The 3-1-1 project has changed the way the public and the mayor hold agencies accountable, the manner in which New Yorkers contact government, as well as the way in which agencies operate. For example, by providing access to integrated information from millions of callers, the city is now better able to manage its resources to analyze how it uses staff and identify trends and address problems.

To improve the customer experience further, the city is in the process of

implementing a number of enhancements to the 3-1-1 call center and its Customer Service Management System (CSMS). These enhancements include:

- 3-1-1 on the Web. The vision is to provide through the New York City website (nyc.gov), to the extent feasible, much of the same information and services that are available by calling 3-1-1.
- Closing the loop on service requests. Currently, when a caller requests a service through 3-1-1, the request is passed on to the servicing agency, after which 3-1-1's ability to continue tracking its status is limited. The goal is to integrate agency systems with the CSMS system to provide information more seamlessly and enable callers to check the status of their request more easily.
- Automated escalations. There are times when non-emergency—but nevertheless critical—conditions become apparent through increased calls to 3-1-1. Automated triggers will be developed to escalate these issues rapidly to the appropriate agencies.

Many other initiatives are also under way to improve government services in the city. Examples include:

- Health and Human Services Connect will link more than a dozen city agencies so that case workers are able to share client information without compromising confidentiality. Clients will only need to provide their details once to be included in a virtual, integrated case file, which they will be able to access and update online. As a result, case workers will spend less time on paperwork and more time face-to-face with their clients, providing integrated services that "wrap around" all of a family's needs.
- Human Services Management Solution (ACCESS NYC) will make it faster and easier for residents to receive social services. For example, New Yorkers can be screened and begin the process to apply online for food stamps or school meals. The system will provide online tools that can be used across city agencies to assist with pre-screening, eligibility, verification, enrollment and case management.
- Business Express will make it easier for businesses to open, operate and grow. Rather than having to navigate through the complexities of state and local regulations, businesses will find an online "wizard" ready to take them through the necessary steps for obtaining licenses and permits.

Mayor Bloomberg has established the Customer Service Group (CSG), as part of the Agency Services department within the Mayor's Office of Operations. The CSG aims to help ensure that every customer who interacts with city agencies receives the best customer service possible, whether through in-person visits, over the phone, by letter or email, or via an agency website. The CSG works cooperatively with all city agencies to establish a baseline of current customer service levels, as well as to identify and apply customer service leading practices, including those of the private sector. As Carole Post, director of Agency Services in the Mayor's Office, stressed in our interview with her, "The CSG is relying on a lot of private-sector practices. ... We hope to set a standard that you should have a similarly pleasant experience when you interact with a city agency as you do when dealing with any private-sector

entity that holds customer service in high regard."

Agency Services is itself attempting to break through the 'silos' that exist between agencies to make sure the right connections are made whenever a project requires a multi-agency response to achieve a particular outcome. The ultimate aim for Agency Services is to help institutionalize the way in which agencies will work together in the future by first helping define where accountability for outcomes actually lies.

As Carole Post explained, "We are very much siloed with respect to accountability ... but we need to know who precisely is accountable for any given function. ... For example, in relation to street conditions, we are concerned with the cleanliness and overall connectivity of the roadways, and the quality of our surface areas. There are many agencies responsible for this and we would like to be able to give a general grade to it, and then drill down into that grade and see who is responsible for each respective area."

To help address this accountability issue, Agency Services convened a Street Defect Summit, bringing together the two agencies with primary responsibility for street conditions—the Department of Transportation and the Department of Environmental Protection. Agency Services was instrumental in getting the two agencies around a table to define all possible types of street defects, which were then captured in a Street Defects Glossary. This was the starting point for getting the two agencies to work together to decide who will respond to what kind of defects. Going forward, each agency will be evaluated based upon how it responds to street defects that it is responsible for fixing.

The city government has made some headway in improving transparency and accountability in city agencies. For many years, the Mayor's Management Report (MMR) was the main tool for reporting on the performance of city agencies. Published once a year—including a four-month interim publication, the Preliminary Mayor's Management Report—it provided only a static snapshot of performance. The city government required a more dynamic and user-friendly operational tool for managing agencies.

In February 2008, the city launched the Citywide Performance Reporting (CPR) system. This online performance measurement tool gives New Yorkers access to regularly updated performance data from all city agencies. It publishes more than 500 performance indicators that are integral to New Yorkers' quality of life. To help track progress against outcomes, the system aggregates the data into 'citywide themes' so that New Yorkers can see how well their city is performing in key areas, such as education, social services or public safety. Much of this is being reported for the first time and the initiative represents fresh thinking about how to measure the outcomes for which each agency is responsible.

The Citywide Performance Reporting system features four dashboards from which users can access reports on the city's overall performance management, customer service and service delivery. The system is updated monthly with the most current measurements available for each performance indicator, so it is viewed as a far more interactive and dynamic tool than the Mayor's Management Report. Traffic to the new Citywide Performance Reporting tool has increased tenfold. As Carole Post observed, "We took from that the sense that people were hungry for data and information, but that the MMR was not really providing what they needed."

The Citywide Performance Reporting tool compares current performance to that of a previous year's, providing a short-term performance trend or "snapshot" for use in decision making. It quickly highlights declining performance and provides color-coded early warnings for areas that need attention. City officials now have advanced analytical tools to run the city more effectively, through fast and flexible access to information about agency performance.

New York City officials plan to expand such performance reporting through additional citywide, agency- and program-specific dashboards. They also intend to integrate global positioning system (GPS) analytical tools to display service request information on a map and increase the data available to the public. As Carole Post informed us, "If you want to know what is going on in your neighborhood, you can pull up the

map and see where the potholes are or what certain conditions might be. This is all in the works right now, and some parts are more advanced than others. But, from a global perspective, I think we recognize the value of 3-1-1 and the value of the Web and we want to bring those two functional solutions together in a more holistic way."

New York is doing far more than just simply relying on the Citywide Performance Reporting tool and 3-1-1 data. Recognizing the need to look not just at progress in achieving outcome goals but also at the satisfaction that people feel with their public services, it recently conducted a large public opinion survey of more than 100,000 New York residents, in partnership with the non-profit organization, The Fund for the City of New York. The data from the survey, together with the CPR data and that derived from the 3-1-1 call center, will create deeper insights to help the city government understand how well it is performing. Furthermore, New Yorkers will be able to hold the government to account for its results and the quality of its public services more readily.

Carole Post explained, "We feel that through our customer survey, we will be able to expand those data points (Citywide Performance Reporting and 3-1-1) to learn how our customers view the city. And it is a different kind of data, obviously. ... One of the things that we would like to do with the survey, in addition to making the aggregate results available publicly so that everyone can benefit from this, is to take the data, look at trends, share the data and trends with agencies and have a frank discussion with them about it... We do want there to be some responsibility to make changes where appropriate and where the outcomes demand it."

In the future, the New York City government will continue to make efforts to improve the quality and accessibility of city services. The aims of these efforts are: that services provided will be flexible and driven by people's needs; that New Yorkers will continue to know that personal information is safeguarded and secure; that taxpayers will be assured that investments are chosen and managed wisely; and that government employees will have the tools needed to provide the highest-quality services to their customers.

Key lessons

- The NYC government has a clear strategic vision to bring accessibility, transparency and accountability to its operations. The strong mandate from Mayor Bloomberg has been critical in gaining the buy-in of individual agencies and aligning their efforts around these goals.
- The role of Agency Services has also been an important one. It has been given a new level of authority and charged with working with agencies to achieve the various strategic goals. It uses a "stick and carrot" approach: while the department has the authority to compel agencies to work in a certain way, it seeks to work collaboratively to bring the various agencies on board by inviting their participation and articulating the benefits of a unified citywide effort to address the city's goals.
- The recently formed Customer Service Group has a key role to play in identifying leading practices across government and the private sector and looking at how it might be possible to apply these practices in the New York City government.
- In creating the Citywide Performance Reporting system, the city government was prepared to start from a clean slate when defining each agency's responsibility and accountability. Agency Services devoted a full year to sitting down with each of the 44 city agencies, defining the reason for each agency's existence and determining how best to measure its performance. In doing so, it was able to identify the most critical performance metrics to monitor progress in key outcome areas.
- The New York City government has taken a holistic approach to managing and measuring its performance. It does not intend to rely on one single set of data, but instead uses the key performance indicators from the Citywide Performance Reporting system, analytics from calls to 3-1-1 and the data from the citizen survey to look for ways to improve performance.



Case Study 6

ServiceOntario Making it Easier

In 2006, the Ontario government created ServiceOntario (serviceontario.ca) as a means of giving Ontario's citizens and businesses an easier, more cost-effective way to access government services. ServiceOntario acts as a one-stop shop for government services and information. Everything—from birth, marriage and death certificates to health card registrations and driver and vehicle licensing—is now delivered through this one organization. Over the last two years, ServiceOntario has gradually assumed responsibility for around 80 percent of the province's high-volume routine transactional services.

ServiceOntario has six strategic priorities—the "pistons of the engine"—that guide the direction of the organization. As Deputy Minister and Chief Executive Officer Bob Stark pointed out, "These have all got to be working properly for it to be successful."

The first strategic priority is developing the brand. Regardless of the mode of communication—be it face-to-face, online, at kiosks, by telephone or through written or visual materials (signage, displays, publications)—the

organization has made great efforts to present a consistent, unified visual image. Its marketing strategy centers around this brand image, which is encapsulated in a distinctive logo and the slogan, "making it easier." The aim is to increase ServiceOntario's visibility as the first point of contact for information or help when accessing any provincial government service.

The second strategic priority involves the provision of unique and integrated services, enhanced by the migration of services from different parts of the government. The ServiceOntario business model is based on a transfer of responsibility for delivering customer-facing services on behalf of other departments and agencies across the province (for example, from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, which oversees ServiceOntario). The migration plan deliberately started with the highest-volume services first, moving on to lower-volume services over time. Bob Stark attributes much of the success in transferring so many services in such a short time to the strong commitment

shown across all levels of government including all levels of political leaders, and "the ability to partner in a very open and co-operative way."

In facing the challenges these migrations have raised, ServiceOntario has focused on reengineering processes and underlying systems to support a more customer-centric view. The primary focus is, therefore, on the customer experience. However, integration has also created opportunities to increase efficiencies. Now, for example, customers who go in person or online to renew their driver's license are also likely to be asked if they wish to renew, say, their health card at the same time.

The third strategic priority is ensuring that the quality of service provided supports the expectation that has been set by the brand. ServiceOntario focuses strongly on improving the customer experience and ensuring consistency across channels. The quality of service delivery, therefore, is a strong priority. The organization even offers service delivery guarantees on seven of its services (to date) so that, in the event of failure to meet the standard that it has promised, it will return the

customer's money. This policy has been well received by customers and gives a strong impetus to the organization to meet its service standards. For example, for birth certificates, the organization has committed to processing applications within 15 days, and has already achieved a 99.7 percent success rate on this. As Bob Stark observed, "It is about our commitment to the quality of service that we are delivering. It helps us internally as well, in terms of getting some tension on the operational elements of our business. But it really is a public-facing initiative."

In support of this commitment to superior customer service, ServiceOntario has also established effective ways of seeking and managing customer feedback through its Customer Experience Office. The organization is now looking at managing what it calls exceptions processing, which means serving customers who have an issue with a service, or a need to follow up with the organization a second time. The leadership recognizes the importance of swiftly following up and resolving any second contacts effectively to support the organization's customer service pledge of being "Caring, Accountable, Responsive and Reliable."

The fourth priority is the delivery of cost-effective service delivery using consistent, enterprisewide processes. Strong processes and procedures are critical to ServiceOntario's success, and their Success Through Effective Process (S.T.E.P) initiative was developed to help standardize the way the organization operates and provide staff with tools to help them make intelligent, enterprisewide and consistent decisions.

ServiceOntario's fifth strategic priority is the formation of partnerships within and outside of the government—an essential step for an organization that brings together services across different jurisdictions. One of the best examples of collaboration is the bilateral agreement with Service Canada (servicecanada.gc.ca), which provides the single point of access to a range of federal government services. This agreement lays the groundwork for future collaboration and gives citizens broader access to government information and services by sharing free publications within offices. It also provides Internet links between

federal services and provincial services online. There are also a number of co-located front offices in some parts of the province. While the partnership presents some challenges around issues, such as accountability, authority, data sharing and privacy, these have been considered and specified in the Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations. It is also important to have the right governance structure: Service Canada and ServiceOntario have a joint executive committee that meets monthly and looks at all the operational issues using feedback and performance measures provided by the party delivering each service.

ServiceOntario is involved in several other strategic initiatives that involve partnering across jurisdictions. One of the most developed initiatives is Biz Pal, which enables businesses to find all permits and licenses they need from multiple jurisdictions. Although the responsibility for issuing these legal documents is spread across three jurisdictions (including municipal, provincial and federal), customers are now able to address all their requirements at a single location. A similar initiative applies to birth registrations. New parents can go online and register a birth with the provincial government at the same time as applying for a social insurance number from the federal government.

Finally, creating a high-performance organization from the successful integration of people from different parts of the government is ServiceOntario's sixth strategic priority. The migration of services to ServiceOntario has brought together people from different agencies (with different working cultures) to ServiceOntario. A robust internal marketing campaign, emphasizing the brand values and behaviors expected of staff, has helped to promote the customer-service focus among all staff. Also, a greater emphasis on employee engagement has entailed opening up lines of communication, involving the workforce in understanding where priorities should lie, and responding appropriately to their ideas and concerns.

Key Lessons

- A strong mandate and an unwavering commitment from the leadership at the political level and from the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, proved to be critical elements in the successful creation of ServiceOntario. These two also aided in the smooth transition of services.
- ServiceOntario is trusted with delivering services of which it previously had no specific knowledge or experience. Many details have to be "hammered out" when a service is handed over, in particular to do with scope (what is moving and what is not), performance metrics (service levels, delivery dates, etc.) and finances (available budgets versus actual costs of delivering the service). Success will, therefore, rely heavily on building good relationships with individual government departments and the ability to enter into close working partnerships.
- Appropriate governance of the transitioned services is also vital. It was important from the start to establish the key roles, responsibilities, service standards and accountabilities through negotiating the Memoranda of Understanding. Various governance committees have been established to keep the relationship between ServiceOntario and its partner ministries on track. For example, ServiceOntario's assistant deputy ministers meet regularly with their counterparts in the partner ministries, both formally and informally, to review how well services are working and analyze business results. They then report to ServiceOntario's deputy minister/CEO, who, in turn, is accountable to a board of directors that provides advice and steers strategic initiatives prior to going before the minister.
- ServiceOntario takes on services "as is" and looked to transform them and gain efficiencies once it had taken over responsibility for them. With the services transferred so far, this arrangement has allowed time for new staff to adjust to the new organization.
- The organization takes a very active approach to what it calls "issues management," identifying what issues might arise, anticipating and monitoring public reaction and mitigating any adverse reaction by undertaking public relations activities to demonstrate what it has done—or will do—about particular issues.

The ServiceOntario business model is based on a transfer of responsibility for delivering customer facing services on behalf of other departments and agencies across the province.



Country Reports

Australia

Belgium

Brazil

Canada

Denmark

Finland

France

Germany

Ireland

Italy

Japan

Malaysia

Netherlands

Norway

Portugal

Singapore

South Africa

Spain

Sweden

United Kingdom

United States



Australia

Capital

Canberra

Latitude/Longitude

27°S 133°E

Population

20,600,856

Currency

Australian dollar (AUD)

Land area

7686850 sq km

Kevin Rudd became Australia's new prime minister in November 2007. Prime Minister Rudd leads a new Labor Party government, which replaces the former coalition government. The election results had particular significance: for the first time since federation in 1901, all levels of Australia's government were aligned under one party, although the state of Western Australia subsequently fell to the Liberals. From a customer service perspective, the federal government will potentially be better placed to achieve cooperation from states in its efforts to improve service delivery. Better customer service may result; now that all three levels of government are politically aligned in a majority of states, united in support of the new prime minister.

At the time of this research, we had seen no dramatic changes in terms of the Australian government's approach to serving citizens. Responsive Government: A New Service Agenda, the e-government strategy that was launched in April 2006, remains in force and is now in the final phase of implementation, with completion expected by 2010. The Australian Government Information

Management Office (AGIMO) drives this service agenda and one of its priorities has been to implement the Australian Government Online Service Point (AGOSP) program. The AGOSP program focuses on improving the citizen portal, australia.gov.au, to make it the principal entry point to online government services. Enhancements to the portal include the phased introduction of single sign-on for multiple services and the addition of new online services.

The government continues to monitor the take-up and satisfaction with its electronic channels. Interestingly, given Australia's high Internet penetration, we found that Australians tend to be traditionalists in their interactions with government. In our citizen survey, although 41 percent reported having contacted government using technology channels in the previous 12 months, 73 percent of Australians reported a preference for traditional channels, and only 20 percent said they preferred technology channels for their interactions with government.

In terms of cross-government collaboration, 51 percent of Australians

reported that they think their government is either fairly or very effective at working together to meet citizens' needs (versus 43 percent who believe their government is ineffective). We expect these numbers to improve over time, given the particular emphasis the Australian government has recently put on collaboration across agencies. Apart from the AGOSP program (which itself is a major cross-agency initiative), notable examples we found include the Councils Online Services. This service was developed by five New South Wales local councils to provide a fully integrated, single point of online access to a wide range of council services, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In addition, Centrelink—while not new—continues to be enhanced and the Australian government reports significant increases not only in citizen self-service, but also in service satisfaction. Recently, Centrelink has provided coordinated emergency responses to some significant natural disasters—including storms in South Australia and Western Australia, floods in Victoria and New South Wales, cyclones in Western Australia and bushfires in Tasmania, Western Australia and Victoria.

Australians report themselves to be very involved in political and social life: in our citizen survey, 71 percent of Australian respondents reported having participated in a political, voluntary or local community activity (other than voting in an election) during the previous 12 months. We have noted in the past some of the innovative ways the Australian government is capitalizing on citizens' willingness to become involved in social ecosystem relationships that improve outcomes. This year too, we found a number of new and interesting examples, including the Communities for Children initiative, described in the case study on page 65.

The Australian government (and in particular, the new administration) seems to be very active in providing citizens with opportunities to engage with the government in priority setting and service design. For example, Prime Minister Rudd convened an Australia 2020 Summit in April 2008 to help shape a long-term strategy for the nation's future. The 2020 Youth Summit, which was held prior to the Australia 2020

Summit, presented an opportunity to the youth of Australia to discuss their ideas about diverse issues ranging from national productivity to national health strategy to the arts. Another interesting example is the new Community Cabinet meetings program, which gives people in communities across Australia an opportunity to discuss issues with Cabinet members in person.

The government also continues to solicit community input on how to use new Internet technologies, such as blogs, to improve citizens' opportunities to consult with government. At a local level, the Victorian government has made a foray into the virtual world of Second Life. It developed a prototype called "Melbourne Laneways" that gathers information and data for the Victorian business community and others interested in testing the potential of the virtual world. The results from development of this prototype are expected to be made available next year.

We will watch these initiatives with interest, and in particular, the effect they have on citizens' perceptions. While Australian respondents in our citizen survey have fairly positive attitudes about the job their government is doing keeping them informed (52 percent favorable versus 26 percent unfavorable), they have decidedly less favorable impressions of how good their government is at seeking the opinions of citizens (34 percent favorable versus 38 percent unfavorable) and being open and transparent in making policy decisions (36 percent favorable versus 41 percent unfavorable).

As Australia looks toward a future of leadership in customer service, it seems to be taking some important steps to forge relationships with citizens that are based on more than just the quality of service transaction. Even as it continues to build the foundations of service that demonstrate its commitment to responsive and efficient governance, it has also made impressive moves toward actively engaging citizens in activities that will more directly inform government decision making and encourage shared responsibility in pursuit of desired social outcomes.



Belgium

Capital

Brussels

Latitude/Longitude

50°N 4°E

Population

10,403,951

Currency

Euro (EUR)

Land area

30528 sq km

The second half of 2007, continuing into 2008, was a time of significant upheaval for Belgium. After nine months of deadlock, Yves Leterme finally took over as prime minister from Guy Verhofstadt in March 2008. Prime Minister Leterme now leads a five-party government of Dutch- and French-speaking parties that have pledged to enact a major reform of the state.

Central to reform in Belgium, the drive toward administrative simplification continues. The Kafka initiative—a federal government attempt to simplify rules and reduce administrative burdens and red tape—successfully completed all tasks set for the 2003–2007 timeframe. Administrations continue to subject their new rules and legislation to a “Kafka-test” (determining whether the number of forms or contacts with government required are truly necessary, for example), with a goal of making citizen and business interaction with government easier and more logical. Likewise, citizens can send their proposals to simplify administration or send stories about things that they see going wrong to the Kafka website

(kafka.be). In fact, over the past four years, 80 percent of improvement suggestions to the site came from citizens and resulted in more than 200 administrative simplifications. The Kafka de-complexity initiative may already be paying off for the Belgian government—our citizen survey revealed a 7 percent drop in the number of contacts citizens had with their government over the previous year.

In 2007, Belgium enacted its Charter for Friendly Government, a move that is likely to have a positive ripple effect across many key areas for years to come. This move should help improve collaboration across the various arms of the government (every public service must use the data that is already available at other public services) and provide a more meaningful vehicle for public recourse. The charter sets reasonable time limits for all citizen questions to be answered and mandates the inclusion of full contact information (name, function, telephone number, address and email) of the public servant responding on every piece of government correspondence.

The charter also standardizes customer service operations across government—a key decision in a country whose population shows a decided preference for traditional methods of interaction. In fact, our citizen survey this year revealed that nearly twice as many citizens had interacted with the government via traditional channels (walk-in, telephone, mail) as those who had used more modern channels, such as email or the Internet. Interestingly, corresponding with the implementation of the charter, from 2007 to 2008, there was a 16 percent increase in the number of Belgian citizens who reported a marked improvement in the ease of contacting government agencies (either in person or through a walk-in service).

Despite citizens' continued preference for traditional channels, the Belgian government continues to make important investments in technology innovations to modernize the administration. A number of these initiatives, such as the government's efforts to issue electronic identity cards (IDs) to its citizens, are being developed with the aim of exporting Belgian know-how and expertise and developing countrywide applications that are compatible with pan-European ones. For example, Belgium has plans to build an e-Government Resource Network with a number of European partners who will work on a voluntary basis to develop open-source information and communications technology (ICT), electronic ID and e-procurement standards and tools, among others.

Growing from a more local level, the CommunesPlone initiative counts among its founding members a number of towns from the Walloon region, which came together in an effort to gain greater independence from IT services providers (and freedom from being locked into vendor licenses) by developing applications and websites in a cooperative manner for their own as well as their citizens' use. In this fine example of a growing social ecosystem, the group has already developed a number of different modules using the open-source content management system, Plone. These modules include the development of Intranet/Extranet facilities, council management, online administrative documents and identification by electronic identity card. Since its start

in 2005, the initiative has grown rapidly and now counts more than 50 Belgian and French local governments among its members, with international membership growing rapidly as more applications come online. There are few formal governance structures in the group, no membership fee and no formal association among members. Instead, the group hired coaches for a year to help it develop a workable, freeform style of collaboration.

Belgium's efforts at providing fair and equal access seem to have translated into positive attitudes: our citizen survey showed that Belgian citizens were twice more likely to have a positive opinion than a negative one about the job their government is doing providing equal access to government services. However, more work needs to be done in terms of improving openness and transparency in the way government makes policy decisions and in seeking the opinions of its citizens: in these areas, citizens were about twice more likely to have a negative opinion than a positive one about the job their government is doing. Interestingly, Belgian citizens reported being relatively less involved in aspects of political and social life than did citizens in the other 20 countries we surveyed. They were also less likely to feel their government was doing a good job keeping them informed about its performance.

Looking to the future, the government needs to translate its good work in developing channels of access into real means of greater citizen engagement. In this regard, the government could focus more of its efforts on building citizen interest and knowledge about how to use the new electronic tools in which it continues to invest, to turn these into channels for citizens to help prioritize and drive social and economic outcomes.



Brazil

Capital

Brasilia

Latitude/Longitude

10°S 55°W

Population

191,908,598

Currency

Real (BRL)

Land area

8511965 sq km

The year 2007 was a politically quiet year for Brazil; 2008 likewise remains fairly uneventful. President Lula continues to grow in popularity, setting the stage for the government to give renewed focus to improving customer service.

For now, progress on a customer service agenda continues to be fairly slow and modernizing the public administration, improving both its efficiency and the way it serves citizens, does not seem to be a top priority for the Brazilian government. Instead, the government's new flagship strategy, the Government Plan for Growth Acceleration (known in Brazil as PAC), focuses on critical issues, such as investing in the energy industry and the country's physical infrastructure and logistics, to promote economic growth and reduce levels of poverty. This is now the primary preoccupation for Minister Dilma Vana Rousseff, who heads the e-Government Executive Committee. While this is not surprising, given Brazil's status as an up-and-coming economy on the world stage, other initiatives seem to have been forced to take a back seat.

João Batista Ferri de Oliveira, newly appointed in April 2008, now runs the

e-government department within the Ministry of Planning. The department remains focused on creating policies and guidelines to ensure that e-government initiatives promote citizenship, encourage digital inclusion, benefit from sharing knowledge, platforms and open source software, and promote intra-agency collaboration. There is considerable focus on ensuring that all government websites are user-friendly and accessible to all citizens (specifically including people with disabilities). The federal government has mandated the use of the Accessibility Model of Electronic Government (e-MAG) standards for website design and developing a Website Accessibility Reviewer and Simulator (ASES) to test accessibility.

Last year, we mentioned the government's plan to revamp Portal Brasil, its e-government portal, to make it more user-friendly and useful. This initiative still seems to be at the planning or investigation stage, however, as the portal remains a somewhat poorly structured collection of information and (often broken) links to other departmental websites. Given the Internet accessibility issues many

citizens have, Brazilians, not surprisingly, continue to be traditionalists in their interactions with government. Our citizen survey revealed that over the previous 12 months, Brazilians were significantly more likely to have conducted their government interactions through walk-in centers than through all the modern channels of Internet, e-mail, mobile phone or short message service (SMS)/text combined.

One area where the Brazilian government has been ahead of the game is in encouraging social participation. Through dedicated councils, which inform policy on an ongoing basis, and forums for debate that are organized on an as-needed basis to discuss government matters, the government allows societal participation in public decisions across a range of areas—from agriculture to tourism to human rights. The "Multi-annual Plan" (Plan MAP) is the vehicle through which the government plans to set the country's priorities for the next three years. This plan counts on the participation of society in defining, managing and monitoring these priorities. Under the most recent Plan MAP (2004–2007), the federal government launched the campaign "Brazil for All" to encourage social participation. Over the course of seven weeks, the government organized a series of public debates involving approximately 2,200 national, regional and special-interest organizations, with at least one government minister attending each debate.

The Brazilian government has expressed its belief in transparency in public administration to build a new state-society relationship, in which prevention of fraud and financial controls are legitimate tools to solidify democracy. To this end, and to shake off the taint of corruption while fostering greater transparency and accountability, the General Comptroller's Office (CGU) launched the Transparency Portal (portaltransparencia.gov.br) several years ago. This portal makes it easy to access information on federal budgets and spending via the Internet.

Despite the implementation of such policies and mechanisms, Brazilians continue to express negative attitudes about their government's performance in many areas related to building its

relationship with citizens. In our citizen survey, we asked all respondents to give their perceptions of how good or bad their government is in eight different areas related to building trust. These included being open and transparent; being accountable; informing citizens about policies and services; seeking citizens' opinions; providing equal access to services, targeting resources appropriately; tailoring services to individual needs; and, overall, delivering a better quality of life. In each of these areas, Brazilians were significantly more likely to have a bad impression (with perceptions of openness and transparency about decision making being the most negative) of the government.

Brazilians also express a very poor opinion of the government's performance at resolving issues that people raise through formal complaint mechanisms. While 57 percent of respondents said they had felt like making a complaint about government departments or services in the past year, only 22 percent had actually done so. Of those who had, the overwhelming majority (almost 9 out of 10) felt that the government had not resolved their complaint effectively. These findings suggest a lack of accessibility to adequate recourse mechanisms, leading to unresolved frustration with government services. This area should become a key focus if the government truly wishes to improve accountability to forge a stronger connection to its populace.

Looking ahead, Brazil has some valuable foundations for building a new relationship of trust with its citizens. Factors such as a thriving economy, inward investment and relative political stability are contributing to a new and growing prosperity. This prosperity should give the government freedom to explore ways of developing leadership in customer service as a means of encouraging a co-productive relationship with citizens. Initiatives, such as the councils and debate forums mentioned earlier are good first steps, but now the government must concentrate on developing more consistent channels of interaction, cross-governmental cooperation and connection with non-governmental

entities. Amid its efforts to build its global competitiveness, the government must not lose sight of developing the equally important mechanisms for citizen engagement, to involve citizens directly in the process of setting priorities and delivering improvement.



Canada

Capital

Ottawa

Latitude/Longitude

60°N 95°W

Population

33,212,696

Currency

Canadian dollar (CAD)

Land area

9,984,670 sq km

Stephen Harper's minority government, elected in January 2006, is already the fourth-longest minority government in Canadian history, having survived a series of confidence votes during its tenure. At the time of writing, however, the Canadian government was facing a mid-October 2008 election—which could affect progress of the country's service agenda.

For now, the Government of Canada's existing service strategy remains in force, with its citizen-centered approach to service within departments intact. Among the four pillars of leadership in customer service, Canada's work in cross-government collaboration seems particularly worthy of mention. Canada has a federal system of government, which means that the public receives services from up to four levels of government: federal, provincial/territorial, regional and municipal (or local). Simplifying this complex public-sector environment and working effectively requires tremendous inter-governmental collaboration.

To address the challenges and promote collaboration across jurisdictional

boundaries, Canada has developed a robust set of inter-jurisdictional institutions over the past 10 years. These institutions bring together federal, provincial/territorial and select municipal chief information officers, as well as leading service policy and delivery officials to pursue opportunities for adopting common practices and collaborating on service delivery. A fine example of this principle in practice is the Labor Market Development Agreement (LMDA) Infrastructure Project. This was the single largest transfer of program delivery responsibility in Canadian history—seven federal job training programs and more than 500 employees transferred to the province of Ontario, with no interruption of service.

Overall, the principles behind the Canadian government's Public Sector Service Value Chain lay out the connection between employee satisfaction and commitment and citizen satisfaction with public services. The Public Sector Service Value Chain also suggests that the success of the relationship between citizens and public service has an impact on people's overall trust and confidence in public institutions.

In fact, as we have noted for several years, Canada has a long history of establishing citizen-centric services with high take-up and user satisfaction. Going forward, the government will continue to focus on improving its back-office structures, employee-to-employee service and internal management policies in its drive toward high performance. For example, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) is finalizing a service policy and framework, which would address requirements related to service standards, accessibility, client satisfaction measurement, a common look and feel, communications, official languages, along with other service-related activities. These moves, in conjunction with the government's relatively new Policy Framework on Information and Technology, are intended to set the stage for sound stewardship and responsible management.

In general, the Canadian government does enjoy the confidence of its citizens. For example, Canadian citizens were more likely to have positive attitudes about the job their government is doing in seven of the eight areas we surveyed related to building trust: government being accountable for what it achieves; informing citizens about policies and services; targeting resources to people who need them; providing equal access to government services for all citizens; seeking the opinions of its citizens; tailoring services to meet individual needs; and, overall, delivering a better quality of life. "Providing equal access to government services for all citizens" topped this list—citizens were three times more likely to express positive opinions (60 percent positive versus 20 percent negative)—followed by "government delivering a better quality of life", where citizens were two-and-a-half times more likely to feel positive (53 percent) than negative (21 percent).

The only area where citizens were more likely to feel negative about the job the Canadian government is doing is in its openness and transparency in making policy decisions. In this area, only 36 percent of Canadians had a positive attitude, while 43 percent had a negative attitude.

To be sure, Canada has made a commitment to accountability and transparency. Its service charter outlines

the government's commitment to its citizens and describes the services offered to them. Nine service standards establish the level of service to be provided, as well as the protocol for an annual performance scorecard. The government has also created an Office of Client Satisfaction as a neutral and autonomous body to receive, review and implement suggestions. In addition, the government conducts feedback studies including a Public Awareness Baseline Study, which examines the service delivery expectations of Canadians. It also conducts a Client Satisfaction Survey, which assesses clients' level of satisfaction.

Central to the Harper government's accountability agenda is to provide full and clear information on its programs and operations, so that the Parliament is able to hold the government accountable for its actions and results. However, as we have seen with other countries, the Canadian government continues to struggle to pull together an accurate government-wide view of information, due to a wide variety of technological solutions, configurations and systems for defining and categorizing data within government organizations. Enforcing government-wide adherence to the standards contained in the government's new Policy on Information Management may alleviate some of the practical difficulties that the government has experienced to date in giving citizens a clear window into its operations.

Among the ways the Canadian government is fostering greater citizen engagement is by employing websites, blogs and direct Web TV to reach citizens. For example, when the Parliament is in session, the innovative ParlVU offers Canadians a way to view or listen to live public proceedings from the chambers of the House of Commons and Senate. ParlVU, which is run in partnership with the national Library and Archives Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada, as well as third-party providers, also enhances citizen engagement by providing on-demand access in both of the country's official languages.

Canadians are a very involved society. Sixty-six percent of the Canadian respondents in our citizen survey reported having participated in one or more political, local community or

voluntary activities during the past year. In particular, Canadians were among the most likely of citizens in all the 21 countries we surveyed to say they volunteer or help out in the local community (50 percent of respondents). We see Canadian citizens' spirit of societal contribution as an area of real opportunity for the Canadian government to build and take advantage of social ecosystems.

While 50 percent of the Canadian respondents in our survey already think their government is fairly/very effective with regard to working with non-governmental organizations to improve their quality of life, the perception is that the public sector does not seem to be engaging the third sector in service delivery quite as actively. However, we did find evidence to the contrary through our background research.

Going forward, we believe these social ecosystems will take on new emphasis for Canada as it seeks to maintain its position as a leader in citizen service. The government should focus more attention on formalizing and growing its relationships with groups outside the government sector to continue to be able to deliver complex, cross-cutting outcomes into the future, and to counter the dramatic changes in the global environment that may eventually affect the government's resources and its ability to implement the service agenda at home.



Denmark

Capital

Copenhagen

Latitude/Longitude

56°N 10°E

Population

5,484,723

Currency

Danish krone (DKK)

Land area

43,094 sq km

Parliamentary elections in November 2007 brought no changes to Denmark's political situation as Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen continues to lead a coalition government. Likewise, we saw no major changes in the government's overall strategy for modernizing the public sector, as laid out in the Structural Reform, the Quality Reform, the Globalization Strategy and the Digitalization Strategy (the Danish e-Government Strategy 2007–2010), described in detail in our *Leadership in Customer Service* report last year. Among these four strategies, the primary development was the publication in final form of the Digitalization Strategy in June 2007. This strategy focuses on better digital service, increased efficiency and stronger collaboration through 35 initiatives (many of which are still in the planning phases) that range from making targeted efforts to involve citizens and businesses in the development of digital services to ensuring the public sector's IT systems all "speak the same language."

In general, the Digitalization Strategy covers many of the mechanisms and practical implementation points related to building cross-government

collaboration and multi-channel service. For example, the strategy stresses that the Citizens Service Centers, together with the Citizens Portal (Borger.dk) and the Business Portal (Virk.dk), will continue as the main elements of the government's channel strategy. On a practical level, the Danish government has been making some notable improvements to these three main channels of citizen interaction. A new version of the Citizen's Portal was due to be launched in October 2008 and will include MySite (Min Side), a personal access point to one's own publicly held data. The government intends to make all citizen-relevant, publicly held data accessible via the Citizen's Portal by 2012.

Similarly, in response to several years of criticism, the business portal Virk.dk was re-launched with enhancements in March 2008. The aim of the portal is to enable businesses to submit required reports quickly and easily to public authorities. While it had generated 50,000 reports to government per month by the end 2007, in January 2008 the portal had 75,000 reports, with a target of 165,000 reports per month by the

end of 2008. The portal will be further developed until 2012 and will eventually be equivalent in functionality to the MySite functionality on Borger.dk.

In addition to its main online channels, the government has continued to explore the use of short message service (SMS) in service delivery, with health care applications a particular area of focus. EasySMS (NemSMS) is a government service used to issue mobile text reminders of doctor and hospital appointments. The Danish government estimates that using EasySMS within health care alone will reduce yearly no-shows at appointments by 32,000 to 53,000 and potentially save DKK38 million to 133 million. The government views utilities, education, employment and social services as having strong potential to benefit from similar SMS applications.

While Danish citizens have a relatively high level of trust in their government's overall ability to improve their quality of life (60 percent of respondents express some or a lot of confidence in their government here), we discovered one area of potential improvement for the Danish government—communication. Danes currently express frustration over how well their government listens to them. When asked how good a job their government does in seeking their opinions, only 22 percent of Danish citizens in our survey were positive, versus 40 percent who expressed a negative opinion. They were more positive about their government being open and transparent about the process of making policy decisions (32 percent positive versus 25 percent negative) and informing citizens about policies and services (38 percent positive versus 29 percent negative). Additionally, among the small proportion of Danish citizens who had made a formal complaint to their government, the vast majority felt that government had been ineffective at resolving their complaints.

To combat this feeling of citizen "disconnection," the Danish government has instituted a number of new mechanisms for citizen engagement. For example, Denmark's prime minister launched a blog in June 2007 through which he has made contact with thousands of Danish citizens. The Danish government's e-democracy initiative

has, at its center, a voting and discussion tool, which the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation provides on Borger.dk. All public authorities can initiate debates and invite citizens to participate in discussions and/or cast their vote using this tool. While a promising concept, its take-up by citizens has to date been limited.

The government expresses in its e-government strategy a desire to develop more relevant service offerings through "close contact with citizens and businesses." Currently, only 16 percent of digital services have been developed in collaboration with citizens and businesses. The government wants to increase this number by using select focus groups and user panels, among other ways. To that end, the Danish government has experimented with user-driven service development using wikis to develop an integration model between its two main portals—Borger.dk and Virk.dk. We will watch the impact of these efforts on Danish citizens' attitudes with interest, as the citizens we surveyed have expressed a clear preference for their government's service development priorities. Nearly twice as many citizens (60 percent) feel that their government should focus on providing services tailored to individual needs as do those who think the government's priority should be to ensure broad, fair and equal access to all citizens (35 percent).

Clearly, the Danish citizenry is an active and eager-to-be-engaged group of people. In fact, Danish citizens are already involved in working to influence societal outcomes to a very large extent. In our citizen survey, 64 percent of Danish respondents reported having been involved in one or more political, local community or voluntary activities (over and above voting in elections) during the previous year. This enthusiasm is a powerful resource for the Danish government. As it continues to build a program of customer service that includes improved mechanisms for service delivery and a greater emphasis on citizen and business centricity, it must refrain from building these mechanisms and new services in isolation, or ignoring the role that powerful programs of customer service can play in building true interaction and engagement.



Finland

Capital

Helsinki

Latitude/Longitude

64°N 26°E

Population

5,244,749

Currency

Euro (EUR)

Land area

338,145 sq km

Certainly, one of the most important programs with service implications currently underway in Finland is the PARAS initiative. Initiated in 2005, PARAS is Finland's move to restructure services and service strategies at the municipal level (the main provider of citizen services in this highly decentralized country), to ensure service continuity and equity across the country—even as it undergoes major internal demographic and economic shifts. One goal of PARAS is to promote voluntary municipal mergers which, going forward, will require local authorities to rethink the strategies and mechanics behind how they provide services, and will require them to streamline their approaches.

Finland saw a major change in its government composition in 2007. Parliamentary elections in March 2007 led to the exit of the Social Democrats and the entrance of the National Coalition Party, which now makes up the ruling majority coalition along with the Center Party, the Green League and the Swedish People's Party of Finland. Not surprisingly, the change in government also has meant

changes in the government program that will affect the service agenda. Extra consideration is now being given to a customer-responsive reform of public service structures, made possible through the extensive use of information and communications technology (ICT). Although the new Finnish government has not included an explicit policy program for an "information society," the new government program puts renewed emphasis on harmonizing the IT system architectures of the municipalities and central government by developing information networks and services and making high-speed Internet access more widely available.

While mentioned only briefly in the government program, the Government Productivity Program continues to be a central element (along with the restructuring and further devolution of national services to local and municipal elements) in curbing the growth in public expenditure.

As mentioned in previous *Leadership in Customer Service* reports, Finland already has a very tech-savvy population, with citizens equally likely to interact

with government through technology channels as through traditional ones. In fact, Finland was the only country of the 21 we surveyed where citizens were more likely to express a preference for conducting business with the government via technology channels (48 percent) rather than through traditional ones (37 percent).

The Finnish government has already translated this citizen comfort with multiple channels into positive service experiences for its citizens. Among the eight areas that we surveyed related to government building trust with its citizens, Finnish respondents were most likely to have a positive opinion of the job their government is doing in informing citizens about policies and services, and providing equal access to government services for all citizens (41 percent expressed positive opinions in both cases).

Interestingly, the government does not yet seem to have employed some of these fundamentals of leadership in customer service, although they are real levers for citizen engagement. Only 28 percent of Finnish respondents feel positive (versus 40 percent negative) about the government's openness and transparency in the process of making policy decisions; and only 26 percent feel positive (versus 44 percent negative) about how good the Finnish government is in seeking the opinions of its citizens.

These attitudes are important, especially considering the relationship that our survey discovered between citizens' engagement and their trust in the government. In fact, when we asked Finnish citizens how much they trusted the government to improve the quality of their lives, 46 percent said "some" or "a lot" versus 53 percent who said "not much" or "no trust at all." In addition, only 26 percent of Finnish believe that the government is doing a good job at delivering a better quality of life for them and their families (versus 38 percent who think otherwise). For Finland, engaging citizens in the process of their own governance as a means to building trust seems a real opportunity for improvement.

While the Citizen Participation Policy Program of the previous government has not continued under the new government, Finnish citizens do have a

number of mechanisms for participating in government decision making and there are more planned, which may begin to shift attitudes. The Finnish government recognizes the fact that the use of new technologies could encourage more citizen participation and plans to create a strategy for realizing the potential of electronic participation by 2012.

One current technology-enabled method of engagement is an electronic discussion forum (otakantaa.fi), where citizens can comment on initiatives that are being launched or are underway in areas related to administration and legislation. When a discussion topic closes, a summary is written and published, which then becomes part of the initiative's documentation. Otakantaa.fi also allows for online chats with ministers; however, these interactions are of much shorter duration than the discussion boards—typically lasting only one hour on a predetermined day.

Among Finland's perceived strengths is the government's ability to work collaboratively. Fifty-five percent of the Finnish respondents we surveyed think their government is either fairly or very effective at working together to meet the needs of citizens—one of the highest positive ratings of the 21 countries we surveyed. These ratings may improve further, as the government has recently developed a new cross-organization strategy for improving citizen service. The report, *New Citizens' Services*, was released in February 2008 and includes a model service agreement, principles for sharing costs, quality criteria and guidelines for personnel positions.

In addition, Government Resolution on the Information Society 2007–2011 specifies that "a new multi-channel IT model of shared services will be developed and introduced. Administrative services will be provided to the user in electronic form through one centralized portal." This resolution calls for a reform of public service structures, close cooperation in administration and the introduction of a service-based architecture. Processes and systems in financial and personnel administration will also be harmonized to support cost-efficient services and service centers.

The Finnish government is perceived to be less effective in the area of working with non-governmental organizations to

improve citizens' quality of life. Only 41 percent of the Finnish respondents in our survey feel their government is effective in this regard (versus 46 percent who say the government is ineffective). In our background research, where we did find evidence of cross-sector collaboration, the initiatives were quite innovative. For example, Finland hopes to have instituted a national e-prescriptions database by 2011. This database will help a physician to be able to access all the medicines prescribed for a patient and plan treatments accordingly. This information will be highly secure, with only doctors and pharmaceutical personnel having access to it.

Initiatives such as this, which require participation from both the public and private sectors, should serve as a model that Finland should seek to expand, as it represents the type of social ecosystems that we believe will play a fundamental role in delivering sustainable social outcomes for Finland's citizens—even as the country's future service strategies and mechanisms continue to pursue the changes that have already begun.



France

Capital

Paris

Latitude/Longitude

46°N 2°E

Population

64,057,792

Currency

Euro (EUR)

Land area

547,030 sq km

President Nicholas Sarkozy's election in May 2007 is likely to spur more cost savings and restructuring efforts by the French government, as one of his main aims is to reform public institutions in the country. In fact, in the past year, the new government has already made significant moves toward that end.

Chief among these moves is the reform process called Révision Générale des Politiques Publiques (RGPP), led by the ministry in charge of state reform. The RGPP differs from past reform efforts in three key ways. First, its larger scope: past French state reform efforts have been very selective, focused on specific topics or ministries. In contrast, RGPP will cover all ministries and areas of public service and include them in the transformation process.

Second, its leadership: rather than being an administrative reform led by high-level civil servants, RGPP is a broader political reform led by the president, the prime minister and all ministers. Involving political figures at the highest level is viewed as key for realizing the government's reform ambitions.

Finally, its basic intention: the French government has recognized that linking quality of service purely to spending levels led the country into some misguided practices. RGPP is being implemented with a recognition of the importance of alignment among organizations and the linkage between political objectives and individual organizational behavior. The ultimate goal is to completely reform all state institutions in France, making them more customer-oriented and efficient, while saving up to EUR 7 billion by 2011 in the process.

This state reform is likely to affect France's service agenda in positive ways by spurring new levels of cross-government coordination and cooperation. Improvements to French state efficiency will come as more central administrative services are merged and unnecessary services (as well as bureaucracy for citizens) are removed. For example, the government has decided to streamline drivers' licensing and building permit processes and remove the process for income declarations related to certain services. More than 300 reengineering

decisions have been made and will be implemented—beginning in the coming months and running until 2011. A quarterly public report is produced by the Minister of State Reform.

The change is much needed. In last year's *Leadership in Customer Service* study, we described how our citizen survey revealed a degree of discontent with government among the French public. In our 2008 survey, we discovered that the situation had not materially improved over the course of the year. For example, we surveyed citizens' attitudes toward government across eight governmental attributes related to building trust with citizens. In not one of the eight areas were French respondents more likely to have a positive perception.

Further, among all 21 countries surveyed, French citizens expressed the least amount of overall trust in their government's ability to deliver a better quality of life for them and their families. While 27 percent of French respondents expressed some trust (22 percent) or a lot of trust (5 percent), nearly three-quarters (72 percent) expressed little trust (42 percent) or no trust at all (30 percent). In light of these findings, the impact on public attitudes will be worth watching as the citizen-centric RGPP gains traction and translates into customer service improvements.

That is not to say that the French government has not made inroads already—particularly in the area of improving multi-channel services. For example, the work toward making all government services available online or through the telephone, which was the key focus of the 2004–2007 ADELE program, continued during 2007 and into 2008. Following on the success of the customer-centric "mon-service-public" portal the government has merged two portals—administration24h24.gouv.fr and adele.gouv.fr—to move toward its goal of having a single public administration portal (service-public.fr). Likewise, work continues on setting up the common protocols, frameworks and technologies to enable information exchange between agencies and encourage greater cross-government cooperation.

In another example, the government introduced an entirely new service, allowing citizens to make their tax income declaration over the phone,

in addition to the existing mail and Internet channels. Interestingly, our citizen survey revealed a marked increase over 2007 in the number of French citizens who felt it was fairly or very easy to interact with the government over a telephone (from 34 percent in 2007 to 71 percent in 2008).

In our survey, less than one-third (29 percent) of French citizens reported that they felt their government was effective at seeking their opinions. We have, however, found some isolated examples of the government working to encourage further participation. For example, the website ensemblefonctionpublique.org allows registered citizens to give their opinions and suggestions on the future of public services and to take part in public debates. In addition, the Direction Générale de la Modernisation de l'Etat (DGME) organizes physical conferences and forums for users to express their views and contribute to the modernization agenda. It recently launched a public consultation portal (modernisation.gouv.fr/simplifions/) aimed at collecting the public's suggestions for administrative simplification. Mechanisms such as these must be nurtured and promoted.

While the French government continues to grapple with citizens' lingering poor perceptions, the past year has brought about a number of changes that may positively shift the tide of public opinion. The RGPP signals a new recognition of the importance of a value-led approach to governance and the linkage between improving customer service and achieving desired governmental and societal outcomes. The challenge now is to sustain the momentum of the past year, even in the face of new demands that shifts in the global environment will inevitably bring.



Germany

Capital

Berlin

Latitude/Longitude

51°N 9°E

Population

82,369,548

Currency

Euro (EUR)

Land area

357,021 sq km

While no major political or social events occurred in Germany last year to affect the country's focus on its service agenda, the German government seems to have shifted attention away from internal reforms toward other topics, such as issues relating to society, environment and education. In the process, improving government service seems to have become a lower priority. This is a shift we have seen elsewhere, which is not surprising, given the changes in the global environment that are pushing new governance issues (stemming from globalization, mass migration, climate change, global economic instability and national security) to the fore.

Germany's Focused on the Future: Innovations for Administration plan to modernize administration—through administrative reform, a reduction of bureaucracy and e-government—was launched in 2007 and gained momentum during the last year, when it went from the strategy phase to the implementation phase through 57 pilot projects. Additionally, the Work Program 2008 includes some concrete areas of focus (related to the European Services Directive and the centralized service

phone number 115) that did not make it into the strategy in 2007.

Germans tend to be traditionalists when it comes to their interactions with the government. Ninety-two percent of our citizen survey respondents in Germany reported having used a traditional channel over the past year for government interaction, versus only 28 percent who reported using a technology channel. Of all 21 countries we surveyed, only Japan had a larger difference between the number of citizens using the two types of channels. Likewise, 72 percent of Germans in our survey responded that they continue to prefer the traditional mechanisms, while 18 percent expressed a preference for more modern channels of interaction.

The trend is unlikely to change soon. The government initiative known as Information Society Germany 2010 (iD2010) is focused on increasing the percentage of online users (particularly women, youth and the elderly) but has not had a dramatic impact since its inception in 2006. The government has stated that it recognizes a looming "digital divide" for young users, but we

found little evidence of many concrete plans to address this divide.

More cohesive multi-channel service provision may soon gain new momentum in Germany. The EU Services Directive, which mandates one-stop service and the creation of a new online access channel, is not only required by European law, but also has an aggressive timeline for completion (the end of 2009). The German government recognizes the EU Services Directive as a key opportunity to push service delivery improvement.

To this end, the service number 115 program is an important move. This initiative targets a wide multi-channel service model (including online services), but wisely focuses on the telephone channel as a first step—a channel which, until recently, had been completely underdeveloped.

In our citizen survey, German respondents expressed some troubling attitudes toward their government. In our survey, we asked citizens to rate their government's performance in eight areas related to building trust. In six out of these eight key areas, fewer than 20 percent of German respondents held a positive perception about their government. In fact, in only one area (citizens' perception of the government's ability to provide equal access to government services for all citizens) were the respondents more likely to have a positive than a negative attitude (33 percent positive versus 26 percent negative).

In contrast, when rating how good a job their government does in seeking the opinions of its citizens, only 14 percent of respondents gave a positive rating, while 57 percent gave a negative one. Additionally, of the German respondents who had formally made a complaint about a government department or service, the vast majority considered their government ineffective at resolving those complaints.

These results should serve as a wake-up call. From our citizen survey across countries, we found a relationship between people's attitudes toward government and the extent to which they feel "listened to," which may also influence their views on how well governments improve their quality of life. Certainly, we found this relationship in

Germany. When asked about how much trust they had in their government's ability to improve their quality of life, 41 percent said "some" (35 percent) or "a lot" (6 percent), while 59 percent said either "not a lot" (36 percent) or "no trust at all" (23 percent).

To their credit, a number of German ministries have taken steps (some in collaboration with other community groups) in the last year to encourage people to take more responsibility for improving the quality of their lives themselves. These include educational programs to combat bulimia and anorexia (the Life Carries Weight program), to foster dialog among parents and their children about the media to which children are exposed (the Open Your Eyes program) and to prevent smoking among youth (the Smoke-free program).

In terms of broader cross-government collaboration, progress on Deutschland-Online (www.deutschland-online.de), with its vision of a fully integrated e-government landscape in Germany, continues (always remaining subject to budgetary availability). However, there is still much to do and Germany is still far away from offering complete and integrated online services. The new goals of the 115 service number are a step in the right direction for developing greater cohesion: not to force everything into one service center, but rather to cross-link intelligently the local service units of the federal, state and municipal levels. That said, all cross-government initiatives within the country seem in need of a more concentrated push.

Looking to the future, as long as the German government continues to progress on its service agenda in an ad hoc rather than fully coordinated fashion, it faces the risk of an increasingly indifferent or even disaffected public. Good (although as yet isolated) initiatives, such as one that allows citizens to submit, sign and discuss public petitions via the website of the German Parliament (which has received tremendous public response since its inception in 2005) should be studied and expanded or replicated to stimulate further citizen engagement. This type of participation, encouraged through more cohesive and fully functional channel strategies, is crucial

for the German government to build relationships of trust with citizens that will lead to a much-needed increased sense of shared responsibility for achieving positive social and economic outcomes for the country.



Ireland

Capital

Dublin

Latitude/Longitude

53°N 8°W

Population

4,156,119

Currency

Euro (EUR)

Land area

70,280 sq km

In April 2008, Mr. Bertie Ahern, Ireland's Taoiseach (prime minister) for 11 years, stepped down. Mr. Brian Cowen, his successor, took office in May 2008 and already faces a number of significant challenges. Amid a slowing global economy, Ireland's "Celtic tiger" economy has experienced a slowdown of its own. Additionally, Ireland's "no" vote in a national referendum on the European Union's Lisbon Treaty stirred controversy about the country's future role within the Union.

In parallel with these macro factors, the government received a report completed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on the Irish public service in April 2008. This report stemmed from the government-wide Public Service Modernization program, which aims to achieve excellent service internally and for the public by promoting modernization for efficiency and effectiveness. Influenced by the findings of the OECD report, Ireland is now focusing its customer service infrastructure-building approach and tactically targeting areas that emphasize value for money, rather than trying to automate every service. Simplicity, low

cost and maximum value have become guiding principles across the government.

One of the earliest results of this approach is a fundamental reengineering and redistribution of services provided by the Reach agency, the Reach portal and the Public Services Broker. Functions of Reach now fall under the Department of Finance, which is responsible for leading Ireland's e-government, technology and telecoms policy, and for pushing greater use of shared applications. The functions provided by the Reach portal are now being moved into existing government websites, such as the Revenue Online Service, where it is logical to do so.

The Public Service Broker was transferred to the Department of Finance in April 2008. The concept of the Public Service Broker is maturing along with new advances in technology, and a move from made-to-order technology to off-the-shelf solutions is evident. There is a shift toward simplicity in hosting and management (and an attendant reduction in maintenance costs). Additionally, the Department of Finance has begun creating templates to help small and medium-sized public

bodies build online services, manage users' identities and streamline content and data needs. The hope is that these new tools, along with the Department of Finance's budgetary powers, will influence agency take-up and cross-public service use of the broker much more than Reach was able to effect.

Irish citizens feel positive about the effectiveness of their government at working together to meet the needs of citizens. In fact, in our citizen survey, only Singapore received higher scores from its citizens in this regard. Ireland's emphasis on customer service overall in recent years has built the generally positive perception among its citizenry toward the quality of service they receive. For example, since last year's survey, there was a dramatic jump in the percentage of Irish citizens who felt that contacting government through different channels was "fairly easy" or "very easy", including the telephone (from 43 percent to 68 percent) and Internet (from 71 percent to 85 percent) channels.

When asked about their attitudes toward specific aspects of government, Irish respondents were most likely to view their government in a positive light for delivering a better quality of life for themselves and their families (55 percent giving a positive rating), as well as for providing equal access to services for all citizens (56 percent positive). In terms of providing a better quality of life, in fact, the average score Irish citizens gave their government was among the top five of all the countries we surveyed.

In terms of providing equal access, Ireland has been ahead of the curve for some years. In 2007, Ireland created a Citizens Information Board, governed by the Citizens Information Board Act 2007 and The Comhairle Act 2000. The Citizens Information Board Act emphasizes two main points: development and expansion of an advocacy service for people with a disability; and a name change for the organization (from Comhairle) that will underscore the link between the national body and citizens' information services nationwide. The Citizens Information Board has already made some notable progress: in 2007, the Citizens Information website (citizensinformation.ie) won a World Summit Award in the e-government category.

In contrast to these positive feelings, our citizen survey revealed that Irish citizens were likely to have a negative perception about the openness and transparency of their government in making its policy decisions (46 percent gave a negative rating on this aspect, compared to just 32 percent who gave a positive rating). This aspect, in fact, was the only area where Irish survey respondents were more likely to have a negative than a positive perception, which suggests that this is an area where the government will need to focus attention to begin rebuilding citizen trust going forward.



Italy

Capital

Rome

Latitude/Longitude

42°N 12°E

Population

58,145,321

Currency

Euro (EUR)

Land area

301,230 sq km

The year 2008 was a year of political upheaval for Italy, with potential implications for the government's focus on its customer service agenda. Prime Minister Prodi resigned after just 20 months in office and Silvio Berlusconi returned to power in April 2008. The new government launched a new reform and modernization program for the public administration. Specific to the e-government strategy, the Ministry for Public Administration and Innovation developed a new program, depending on a combination of technological innovation and legislation, organizational and management changes working in a coordinated way to revitalize overall administrative reform. This program is aimed at rationalizing public administrations organization and speeding up technological innovation.

Service quality and customer satisfaction are two key guiding principles of this reorganization program. In particular, the program will push a set of tools for measuring and increasing the satisfaction of public services' beneficiaries—by enhancing and disseminating best practices (and promoting their use through nationwide awards) and by

developing a benchmarking initiative among administrations.

How the changes in administration and potential changes in government direction play out in terms of citizen service will be of critical importance, particularly in the current environment of public unease over a weakened economy and broad concerns about crime and immigration. Our citizen survey (undertaken between April and June 2008) showed that Italy's government faces a host of challenges to building stronger relationships with its citizens. In seven of the eight separate areas of government performance related to building trust that we surveyed (being open and transparent; being accountable; informing citizens about policies and services; seeking citizens' opinions; targeting resources appropriately; tailoring services to individual needs; and delivering a better quality of life overall), Italians were at least twice as likely to have a negative attitude about the job their government is currently doing. Additionally, in the eighth area, (providing equal access to services) Italians were still more likely to have a negative (44 percent) than a positive opinion (29 percent).

What was perhaps even more disconcerting was that in six of these eight areas, Italian citizens had the largest disparity between positive and negative attitudes out of all 21 countries we surveyed. Italians felt particularly negative about whether the government targets resources to people who need them (with just 14 percent expressing positive attitudes and 67 percent expressing negative attitudes). They also felt negative about the government being open and transparent in how it makes policy decisions (with 17 percent expressing positive attitudes and 65 percent expressing negative attitudes).

While the current attitude of citizens is generally poor, we did, however, see evidence of the Italian government taking steps to improve people's perceptions about its openness and transparency. For example, one of the key drivers for the government's plan to move all public administration payments online and promote electronic procurement is to allow better monitoring of public expenditure. General accounting information is already published on the website of the State General Accounting Department and on the websites of individual regional and local governments. Another example of transparency comes from the Ministry for Public Administration and Innovation, which has published data about curricula, salary and fees of the ministry management. This action was followed by the publication of data related to external coworkers and consultants of the whole public administration sector—from central/national administrations to local administrations and from research bodies/universities to chambers of commerce.

Italy has also taken steps to promote citizen engagement in political life. When drawing up its annual "plan of action for the simplification and quality of regulation," the Ministry for Reform and Innovation of the previous government invited citizens to participate in an online public consultation exercise. The ministry's online survey, launched in February 2008, allowed ordinary citizens and businesses to highlight the problems experienced in their daily lives and put forward proposals for simplifying bureaucratic procedures.

The central government also seems to support efforts by regional and

local authorities to encourage citizen participation in decision making: it co-financed more than 50 e-democracy initiatives, such as virtual town hall meetings. However, our research found many of these initiatives to be behind schedule, indicating they may not be seen as top priority for now.

Forty-two percent of Italians in our survey felt that their government was fairly or very effective at working together to meet the needs of citizens. In our view, one very significant step toward even greater cross-agency collaboration should be the continued development of the Italian Sistema Pubblico di Connettività, or SPC, launched in December 2007. SPC is a federal Web network made up of central and local public administrations, as well as 125 Italian public bodies across the world. It will connect more than 500,000 government desktops and soon more than 1 million phones using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), in what proponents describe as one of the largest public-sector networks in the world and the largest in Europe. The new system should increase interoperability between the different levels of national and local public administrations (which will share common databases and procedures) and ultimately make life easier for citizens and private companies, along with helping to ensure greater cooperation and flexibility at all levels (central and local).

The Italian government has recently defined another key initiative to foster public services quality and citizens satisfaction: the Reti amiche project. The idea behind the initiative is to leverage the current network of post offices, bank offices, pharmacies and other selected outlets to create a large and easy-to-access network for delivery of many public services (such as pensions and tax payments) in order to build a new relationship with citizens. In other words, citizens will access public services through in-person channels that will ensure proximity and user-friendliness.

In contrast to their perception of cross-agency collaboration, only 21 percent of Italian citizens felt their government was effective at working with non-governmental organizations to improve their quality of life. In fact, we found little evidence in our research of initiatives aimed at building a broader

social ecosystem to cultivate positive outcomes. We see this as an area of real opportunity for the government to foster greater collaboration and, by extension, promote greater social participation. In our survey, Italians were the second least likely (after Singaporeans) to report that they had participated in either a local community or voluntary activity in the past year.

Last year, we reported that the Italian government seemed on the verge of a turnaround with regard to its citizen service agenda. The unexpected change in government and growing external social and economic challenges of the past year now paint an uncertain picture of the future of citizen service, yet render it no less important. Looking to the future, the Italian government must not lose sight of the association between the elements of leadership in customer service, and the relationship citizens have with their government.



Japan

Capital

Tokyo

Latitude/Longitude

36°N 138°E

Population

127,288,419

Currency

Yen (JPY)

Land area

377,835 sq km

Japan's relatively new prime minister (Fukuda Yasuo)—who had been elected in September 2007 after the previous prime minister stepped down in the wake of a political scandal—unexpectedly announced in early September 2008 that he too would step down. At the time of writing, the effects of the prime minister's resignation were unclear—particularly given his very strongly stated goals of restoring Japanese citizens' trust in the government through new levels of accountability and, it was hoped, bringing a new stability to the country.

The lingering effects of the previous scandals seem to be reflected in Japanese citizens' current attitudes toward their government. In our survey, we asked citizens about how they felt their government was performing in eight areas related to building trust: being open and transparent about how it makes policy decisions; being accountable for what it achieves; informing citizens about policies and services; targeting resources to people who need them; providing equal access to government services for all citizens; seeking the opinions of its citizens; tailoring services to meet individual

needs; and, overall, delivering a better quality of life for respondents and their families. In each of these eight areas, Japanese respondents were far more likely to hold negative than positive opinions: the percentage of citizens holding negative opinions in these areas ranged from 43 percent to 55 percent, while the percentage of citizens with positive opinions ranged from only 10 percent to 23 percent. Notably, Japanese citizens gave the largest number of negative responses among all 21 countries we surveyed with respect to their government's openness and, transparency and also regarding their government's provision of equal access to services for all citizens.

Given the potential of strong leadership in customer service to translate into greater citizen trust and engagement with the government, these findings and others from our citizen survey deserve further examination. Citizens' perceptions in a number of areas related to building leadership in customer service suggest room for improvement. For example, 28 percent of Japanese respondents felt their government is effective at working together to meet the needs of citizens,

versus 61 percent who felt the Japanese government is ineffective at working collaboratively.

Even more striking, only 17 percent of Japanese respondents felt their government is effective at working with non-governmental organizations to improve their quality of life (versus 66 percent who felt their government is ineffective in this regard). Considering the significant percentage of Japanese citizens in our survey who reported participating in local community or voluntary activities (41 percent), building more formal relationships with non-governmental organizations represents a strong opportunity for the government to connect with citizens.

For now, however, Fukuda Yasuo's emphasis on building trust with the populace had not yet necessarily translated into new overarching strategies for citizen service or citizen engagement. The e-government Promotion Plan, the New IT Reform Strategy and the u Japan Policy, each of which has been in force for several years, continue as the main drivers of the country's customer service strategy, with some moderate updates along the way. The most notable recent development is the Fukuda administration's plan to set up a new cross-ministry Consumer Agency, which would be charged with representing consumers, particularly with regard to food and product safety. At the time of this research, however, this agency was not yet established and whether it will come to fruition is uncertain, given the recent government changes.

Formal vehicles for encouraging citizens to engage with their government are relatively scarce in Japan. Apart from feedback forms on government websites, the main avenue for soliciting citizen input is the Public Comments System, which the government established in 2005. While the government has used the system to invite public comment on a number of issues, citizen use to date has been limited.

Heavy emphasis on uptake of electronic services continues; Japanese respondents in our 2008 survey still expressed a 2:1 preference for traditional over technological channels (64 percent versus 29 percent) in their dealings with the government. The government's emphasis on take-up may have implications

beyond the potential cost efficiencies to be gained: in our 2008 survey, we found a positive correlation between citizens using technology to interact with government and citizens feeling informed. Indeed, only 22 percent of the Japanese citizens we surveyed reported feeling well informed about the Japanese government's performance—the lowest level of all 21 countries surveyed (which had a combined average of 51 percent feeling well informed).

The Japanese government recently instituted some important policies to reach out to those underserved or unfamiliar with more modern channels. For example, in July 2007, it unveiled its Universal-designed IT Society Development 2007 Plan. This plan aims for universal information access for the elderly and people with disabilities, which will be accomplished by establishing support centers, developing information exchange technology and adding subtitles to television programs, among other measures.

As the Japanese government looks to improve its customer service in the future, a number of steps seem clear. Rebuilding a strong economy and national competitiveness has rightfully been given strong emphasis in the past few years. In Accenture's view, the government now needs to focus equal attention on reinvigorating a service strategy that can stimulate greater connectedness with its citizens. Rebuilding trust will be of prime importance to the ability of the next administration to govern. Responsive, citizen-centric service is an important and currently underutilized lever for building that trust. In addition to improving mechanisms for delivering services, the government needs to offer more robust channels for engaging citizens. As evidenced by the extremely high reported levels of participation in the country's most recent elections (a full 88 percent of respondents in our survey reported participating in national or local elections over the past 12 months.), Japanese citizens clearly seek to have their voices heard. Additional channels—beyond the current technological ones—must be made available to take advantage of citizens' enthusiasm. Only then can the government develop true partnerships with its citizens to achieve high performance and deliver outcomes that yield long-lasting value.



Malaysia

Capital

Kuala Lumpur

Latitude/Longitude

2°N 112°E

Population

25,274,133

Currency

Ringgit (MYR)

Land area

329,750 sq km

The Malaysian government currently operates in a challenging atmosphere. Rising food and fuel prices have put pressures on the ruling party. The citizens are increasingly expressing their desire for greater accountability, transparency and improved service delivery. During the 2008 general elections, dissatisfaction with the status quo led to the opposition gaining control over five state legislatures overall. The outcome of these elections could significantly reshape the political landscape (with implications for the government's service agenda) for the next five years.

The Ninth Malaysia Plan continues to be the main strategic document for the Malaysian government's service agenda, and in particular, for improving the public service delivery system. The year 2008 marks the mid-term review for the plan's high-impact programs. Recent events, however (including the increases in oil and food prices noted previously), may put pressure on the government to scale back initiatives under the plan, regardless of the program's overall performance to date.

Specific to service for businesses, the Malaysian government established a special taskforce called PEMUDAH in early 2007, comprising 23 highly respected individuals from both the private and public sectors. PEMUDAH has been charged with facilitating business in Malaysia by identifying improvements to existing government processes and regulations, based on public feedback and global benchmarking reports. It is also responsible for overseeing the implementation of identified improvements, as well as recommending business-related policy changes to the Cabinet, based on public feedback. To start with, PEMUDAH is concentrating its efforts on areas the World Bank has identified as most in need of improvement within the country. Some of PEMUDAH's recent actions have included setting up an electronic payments system for payments to government and focusing on streamlining public procurement processes to make them more transparent and accountable.

In our research, we found little evidence of a coordinated strategy for increasing Malaysian citizens' active participation in government decision making. Instead, citizen engagement tends to happen on an ad hoc basis in Malaysia, with the most common mechanisms being complaint bureaus and availability of "feedback and inquiry forms" on government portals. Nevertheless, some individual leaders are exploring interesting new ways to build greater connections with the citizens they serve, including Facebook pages and blogs with instant feedback mechanisms for concerned citizens.

Despite the lack of a coordinated strategy for citizen engagement, the Malaysian citizens we surveyed tended to hold more positive than negative attitudes about their government overall. In each of eight areas related to building citizen trust that we examined in our citizen survey, Malaysian respondents were noticeably more likely (by factors ranging from approximately 1.5 to 3 times) to have a positive than a negative opinion about their government. However, in only one of these eight areas, "providing equal access to government services for all citizens," did an actual majority of respondents (54 percent) feel positive about the job their government is doing (a reflection of the large numbers of respondents who remained neutral on many of the questions).

In our survey, the three parameters where citizens were least likely to have positive opinions include the government being open and transparent about how it makes policy decisions, being accountable for what it achieves and seeking the opinions of its citizens.

As mentioned previously, transparency and accountability do remain a strong concern in Malaysia. To address the issue, the government has recently made announcements about adding a new oversight of the appointment of judges as well as their judicial conduct, and reviewing the Anti-Corruption Agency to make it an independent body. Moves such as these are seen as fresh reforms that should enhance the perception of transparency in Malaysian government.

In addition, the Ninth Malaysia Plan emphasizes the principle of "good governance for development." To

maintain a culture of performance, accountability and transparency, the government plans to assess public service delivery standards and link these to published performance indices that will be audited periodically. Other plans include holding individual employees responsible for ethical behavior and providing training to heads of local authorities about skills necessary for negotiation and consultation with stakeholders.

One of Malaysia's strengths is the collaboration among government agencies in various areas to enhance service delivery to citizens. Business-centric, citizen-centric and government employee-centric portals are broad cross-government examples. More specifically, we saw pockets of innovation at the local initiative level. For example, the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board is working with a number of state and local authorities to promote Malaysia as a leading destination. Talian Nur is a hotline set up by the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry, which aims to enable early intervention for victims of domestic violence, child abuse and natural disasters. The Talian Nur hotline represents a collaboration involving the Social Institute of Malaysia, the Department of Social Welfare, NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women and the Malaysia National Population and Family Development Board.

The efforts seem to be paying off. Citizens seem to have a positive perception of how well their government cooperates, both across government levels and with non-governmental organizations. In fact, with regard to the effectiveness of their government at working with non-governmental organizations to improve their quality of life, 61 percent of the Malaysian respondents in our survey felt that their government is "fairly" or "very effective" in this regard—the highest favorable response rate among citizens in all 21 countries we surveyed.

Looking to the future, the Malaysian government has taken some important steps to build social ecosystems that will improve outcomes for citizens. It has emphasized cross-government and cross-sector collaboration and in our view, should continue to do so. Still missing, however, are formal and

coordinated mechanisms for citizen engagement—proactively seeking citizen input into policy and providing clear views into how citizen issues are addressed. Heavier emphasis on these areas will be important as the country continues to make strides toward stronger leadership in customer service and the delivery of outcomes that add up to true public service value.



The Netherlands

Capital
Amsterdam

Latitude/Longitude
52°N 5°E

Population
16,645,313

Currency
Euro (EUR)

Land area
41,526 sq km

The Netherlands has begun taking a more disciplined approach to soliciting citizen input as it shapes the government's direction—in terms of both policy and citizen service. For example, one of the first actions of the Netherlands' current coalition government (formed in late February 2007) was to conduct a 100-day cabinet tour through the country to get in touch with citizens and social organizations, and form new policy based on ideas from the public. The resulting plan, *Samenwerken aan Nederland* ("Working on the Netherlands Together"), focuses on six different themes the cabinet found important for the coming years: an active international and European role; security, stability and respect; a sustainable living environment; an innovative economy; social cohesion; and public sector service.

Notably missing from the plan is any mention of information and communications technology (ICT) playing a prominent role in the coalition government's agenda. Additionally, recent negative attention (both media and parliamentary) on big ICT projects within the Dutch government seems to

have significantly tempered appetite for dramatic IT infrastructural changes, which could impact future plans for enabling the country's customer service programs.

That is not to say the Dutch government has not had its share of recent technology successes. Among the more notable is the digital identity system called DigiD, which allows participating government agencies to digitally authenticate the identity of a person who applies for a transaction service via the Internet. The DigiD has been widely adopted by public agencies. Additionally, progress continues on the government's program to develop a Personal Internet Page for every citizen, where users can find information, check personal data and interact with the government through their own personal Web domain. The pilot version was launched in the second half of 2007 with a small group of users and has grown steadily since. According to the current plan, all citizens should be able to participate by the beginning of 2009.

Most current programs related to government-wide efforts to provide better services to citizens and/or

businesses (particularly through the use of ICT) fall under the purview of the ICTU, a special agency created in 2001 to act as a public foundation for commonly funded e-government projects. The ICTU translates policy into specific "building block" projects that cross all layers of government: central, provincial and local. Major current programs of the ICTU include Burgerlink (Citizenlink), which intends to improve public service with the help of citizens; Antwoord voor bedrijven (Answer for Business), a portal for businesses to exchange information with the government; EGEM (e-municipality), which develops products and standards to support municipalities in improving their service and processes with the use of ICT; and Overheid heeft Antwoord® (Government has the Answer®), a new program that aims to create a single access point for citizens, businesses and other organizations to contact the government through different channels.

Among these initiatives, Citizenlink is seen as the "missing link" in the Netherlands' e-government agenda. It is viewed as an answer to the historical deficiencies many countries have experienced in moving beyond cost-efficiency goals and translating their e-government programs into stronger connections (and greater trust) between citizens and government.

The Citizenlink initiative was instituted based on the experience that e-government strategies tend to be supply-oriented and overly focused on service delivery, neglecting the role of engaging citizens as active participants in their own governance. In contrast, the Citizenlink initiative (which runs from 2008 to 2010) has three tasks: to promote service quality (through the adoption of quality codes and an award-winning e-Citizen Charter); to measure customer satisfaction (through an annual national survey); and to stimulate citizen involvement (by developing e-participation instruments).

This last task is of crucial importance. Although the Dutch citizens in our survey had relatively positive perceptions of their government's performance in most areas we examined, they were more likely to hold negative rather than positive opinions about their government's openness and transparency

in making policy decisions and seeking the opinions of its citizens.

Certainly, technology solutions to promoting citizen engagement will not be the complete answer. For example, the government has created the post of national ombudsman to give individuals an opportunity to complain about the practices of government before an independent and expert body. The 100-day cabinet tour, mentioned previously, is another example of non-technology avenues for citizen participation. Interestingly, despite many citizens' reported concerns around lack of consultation, Dutch citizens were most likely of all citizen groups we surveyed to report they had participated in a research survey or focus group about government policy or service provision.

The government has concerns about the limitations of e-democracy. Among these, the perceived unreliability of the Internet and potential for hacking and identity fraud have caused the government to back away from electronic voting. Also, the government recognizes an insufficiency in terms of the general public's technology skills that will continue to delay full realization of the potential for e-democracy until some future point. Lending support to the idea that the Dutch are not fully embracing electronic channels for government interaction, we saw a 5 percent drop—when compared to the 2007 citizen survey results—in the number of Dutch citizens who consider using the Internet for government interactions to be fairly or very easy and a 17 percent rise in those finding the use of telephone for such transactions to be fairly or very easy. Additionally, Dutch citizens expressed an almost 2:1 preference for using the telephone rather than the Internet for their dealings with government.

A large portion of the government's approach for improving participation through technology channels, for now, is through innovative experiments and pilots under Citizenlink. For example, the Netherlands' Voting Assistant compares the stances of competing political parties across 30 main issues. In the recent national elections, about 5 million voters (almost half of those eligible to vote) used the assistant. Following on the success of the Voting Assistant, the ICTU is developing the Voting Tracker,

which pulls together information on the voting records of different politicians to make their positions on specific issues immediate and transparent. Highly targeted initiatives such as these hold real promise for improving perceptions of the Dutch government's willingness to engage citizens in defining policy and improving outcomes.

Looking to the future, the Dutch government continues to operate in an environment of fairly positive citizen perception, particularly in comparison to many other countries. (In fact, Dutch citizens were the second least likely group in our survey—behind Singaporeans—to report that they have never felt like making a formal complaint about a government department or service.) Overall, 62 percent of Dutch citizens in our survey reported they trust their government to improve their quality of life; one of the highest levels of trust among all 21 countries in our survey. This is a strong foundation for building a relationship of true engagement that helps ensure citizens' needs and desired outcomes shape service design and delivery. In the process, we feel that the Dutch government should take care not to allow current perceived limitations in technology and technology "literacy" of the population to shape its efforts to the exclusion of the innovative ICT programs that will enable broader, more cost-effective and lasting avenues for citizen participation.



Norway

Capital
Oslo

Latitude/Longitude
62°N 10°E

Population
4,644,457

Currency
Norwegian krone (NOK)

Land area
323,802 sq km

In 2007, the Norwegian government released its new strategy for modernization: A strong and efficient public sector. This strategy replaces the strategy of the former government, and was developed with input from a combination of public authorities, businesses and non-governmental organizations, as well as from a citizens' conference held in March 2007 (with 150 citizens in attendance).

Central to this new strategy is the principle that the public sector must lead the way when it comes to the environment; ethics; increased citizen inclusiveness, access and involvement; and the adaptability of services. Although the new strategy is not very specific in terms of setting targets and milestones, the government has introduced three large reforms under the strategy. First, the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Service (NAV) reform, which should see NAV service centers established in all 431 Norwegian municipalities before 2010 (which will then become the main access points for citizens in need of welfare, labor and social services). Second, the Governance Reform, which calls for renewing and strengthening government

responsibilities at the regional level by January 1, 2010. And third, the Pension Reform, which is intended to make Norway's pension scheme economical, equitable, socially sustainable and easy to understand and which is also intended to motivate people to work.

The Norwegian government continues to emphasize that the online channel needs to be the main channel of communication between the public sector and citizens/businesses. This emphasis is translating into an increase in take-up: our survey showed that Norwegians had a relatively high rate of interaction with their government overall (in comparison with other countries' citizens), and almost as many had used technology channels for their government interactions as had used traditional channels. Meanwhile, Altinn, the popular portal for businesses, continues to grow both in number of services and number of users.

Norwegian citizens in our survey expressed relatively positive attitudes about how their government is delivering a better life for them and their families expressed higher than

average overall trust in government to improve their quality of life. However, in six out of eight of the aspects of government performance we inquired about, more respondents had a negative, rather than a positive view of their government. This was clear, for example, in respondents' perceptions of government when it comes to seeking the opinions of its citizens (18 percent with a positive perception versus 47 percent with a negative perception), being accountable for what it achieves (20 percent positive versus 41 percent negative) and most notably, being open and transparent about how it makes policy decisions (15 percent positive versus 55 percent negative).

Hopefully, two fairly recent developments should begin to make inroads into citizens' attitudes toward the Norwegian government's openness and transparency. The first is intensified marketing around the online gateway to the public sector in Norway (norge.no) throughout 2008. A recent government survey found that 80 percent of Norwegian users consider the Internet to be the most important channel for seeking public information and services. However, only 40 percent of the survey respondents had heard about norge.no as a site providing access to public sector information, and only 3 percent were able to mention it when asked about common sites for electronic services. The government has planned a series of marketing and advertising initiatives to combat this low level of national awareness.

The second initiative is an expansion of the Ministry of Government Administration and Reform's StatRes program for measuring and displaying public sector performance. StatRes was launched at the end of 2007 to select pilot sectors. Under the expansion, the StatRes project will develop and publish performance-related indicators and statistics for a larger portion of the public sector. The system will include measures for input, activity, output and outcome, displayed through a functional website. Expected users include decision makers and other public sector employees, academics, media, organizations, voters and other stakeholders with special interests in statistical information on public sector resources and activities.

Last year, we described how cross-government collaboration was one of the Norwegian government's weaker areas. In 2008, a majority of Norwegian citizens in our survey considered cross-government collaboration to be lacking. While 34 percent of Norwegian respondents rated their government as being effective at cross-government collaboration, 55 percent rated the government as being not very or not at all effective. Similarly, while 27 percent of Norwegians rated their government as being effective at working with non-governmental organizations to improve their quality of life, 52 percent rated the Norwegian government as ineffective in this regard.

The Norwegian government and other organizations certainly encourage collaboration, as evidenced in both published strategies and speeches. However, the collaboration approach is voluntary and will probably remain so. Those projects that exist thus display the hallmarks of true cooperation. For example, should the NAV offices mentioned previously fully develop as planned, users of the services will find an integrated office where staff of the Labor and Welfare Service and the relevant municipality's social welfare service will work together to find sound solutions. Municipalities and NAV have engaged in a cooperative agreement that describes what services each NAV office will offer. This is the first time that central government and local authorities/municipalities have worked so closely in a common service. In another impressive example, the Service Center for Foreign Workers opened in Oslo in October 2007, just six months after a final decision was made to implement it. A joint offering of the police, the Labor Inspection Authority, the Tax Directorate and the Directorate of Immigration, the common service center offers improved and faster service to foreign workers and their employers.

While examples such as these are very positive, their voluntary nature may mean broader cross-government collaboration remains slow in taking hold. Potentially complicating matters—with regard to the sharing of data—is an apparent slow erosion of trust among the Norwegian public who worry that public authorities and businesses might misuse personal data. A recent survey carried out by the Data Inspectorate

found that the share of citizens with no or little trust in authorities and businesses varies between 17 percent and 27 percent (depending of the type of authority/business), while those who fully or highly trust authorities/businesses falls between 6 percent and 18 percent. The government continues to sort through this issue, and establish guidelines and a public infrastructure for handling and verifying the different electronic IDs currently in use. Measures to develop a government-issued national ID card with a higher security level will also continue.

Looking to Norway's future of leadership in customer service and how it can be shaped to deliver value for citizens, a focus on greater collaboration across government and external entities seems crucial. Among the 21 countries we surveyed, Norwegian citizens were the most likely to report themselves as engaged in political or social life including participating in political elections (59 percent of respondents), local community or voluntary activities (60 percent), signing petitions (34 percent) and attending public meetings (25 percent). Even taking political elections out of the equation, Norway is still the country with the highest levels of reported political and community participation. This is a tremendous resource for the government to use to improve social and economic outcomes. What is needed now are more formalized government efforts to harness the energy and activism of its country's citizens.



Portugal

Capital

Lisbon

Latitude/Longitude

39°N 8°W

Population

10,676,910

Currency

Euro (EUR)

Land area

92,391 sq km

The Portuguese government perseveres with its strategy to modernize the public administration to drive economic growth and competitiveness while building a better relationship with its citizens. During the past year, the government created a new position of Secretary of State, and the person filling this role is taking on many of the cross-government coordinating functions of the now defunct Mission Unit for Coordination of Public Services Modernization (UCMA), and giving new political relevance to a push toward greater collaboration among agencies.

The Simplex initiative (which we first described in last year's *Leadership in Customer Service* study), continues to implement measures aimed at simplifying public administration, reducing bureaucracy, introducing one-stop service points and increasing the use of online channels.

In 2008, these Simplex measures include 180 items, determined through a collaborative effort between all ministries and their departments, as well as in public consultation with individual citizens, as well as companies

and their associations. The measures are structured around essential interactions between citizens and public administration (in health care and education, for example) and key moments in companies' life cycles (such as start-up, applying for patents, mergers and acquisitions, bankruptcy and so on). Improving licensing procedures for both citizens and businesses has also become a major priority.

In tandem with the Simplex initiative is an aggressive focus on improving the functionality and use of the online channel itself. Internet penetration is increasing among Portuguese households, businesses and schools. In addition, a range of new e-services has been launched in the past year, including one that allows citizens to report poor food hygiene and other violations of trading standards.

Other interesting online services introduced over the past 12 months include the Ministry of Justice's CITIUS e-filing service for the submission of legal documents for court cases. CITIUS has now become the only accepted electronic means of presenting case

material to the courts; submissions by ordinary e-mail will no longer be authorized (although paper submissions will still be allowed). A new system called Simplified Business Information (IES) allows businesses to complete a number of obligatory declarations (accounts, tax returns, and statistics) entirely online. IES is notable as it requires collaboration among a number of government departments, so that businesses do not have to submit any information more than once.

Electronic identification cards, known as the Citizen Card are currently being rolled out nationwide, with complete implementation in all parts of the country expected before the end of 2008. So far, citizens seem to have accepted Citizen Cards, which should enable future cross-government services.

Portugal's intense focus on solidifying the online channel has already begun to pay real dividends. In fact, we saw dramatic increases in citizens' use of technology channels for government interactions from 2007 to 2008. For example, according to our citizen survey, use of the Internet to interact with government jumped from 18 percent to 41 percent over the past year.

However, Portuguese citizens continue to prefer, by a margin of almost two to one, to conduct their business with government through traditional channels. In response, the Portuguese government's strategy is not to push everyone online, but to offer a balanced range of different channels, encouraging the replacement of in-person with online wherever possible. One good example of this multi-channel approach is the 2008 upgrade of the existing network of Citizen Stores, including the implementation of new concepts related to in-person service delivery, the interconnection of several channels of access and the expansion of the number of stores in the country.

Based on the results of our citizen survey, it seems that while the government's recent measures to improve the relationship with its citizens are laudable, the impact of these new initiatives on citizens' perceptions of government collaboration and on developing greater trust have yet to be felt. For example, in our citizen survey, 22 percent of Portuguese citizens felt their government was effective (versus

76 percent who felt their government was ineffective) at working together to meet the needs of citizens. Portuguese respondents also reported fairly poor attitudes about their government in eight separate areas related to building trust (being open and transparent; being accountable; informing citizens about policies and services; seeking citizens' opinions; providing equal access to services; targeting resources appropriately; tailoring services to individual needs; and, overall, delivering a better quality of life). Given the relationship between building trust and citizen participation, these results should cause the Portuguese to take notice. In fact, we found Portuguese citizens to be among the least likely to report themselves engaged in different aspects of political and social life of all 21 countries we surveyed.

Looking to the future, we believe that Portugal faces the challenge of sustaining governmental appetite and financial support for value-led service initiatives. These initiatives, while seemingly slow to take hold, will be key to building trust with government and keeping citizens informed and engaged—the crucial prerequisites for achieving desired and sustainable social and political outcomes for the country as a whole.



Singapore

Capital

Singapore

Latitude/Longitude

1°N 103°W

Population

4,608,167

Currency

Singapore dollar (SGD)

Land area

692 sq km

Singapore continues to implement its customer service agenda according to plan, with no major contextual changes during the past year to interrupt progress. iGov2010 (for integrated Government), which we described in last year's *Leadership in Customer Service* study, remains the master plan by which the government intends to achieve a higher level of public service by harnessing IT to further simplify, standardize and gain synergies across government processes. The vision of the iGov2010 master plan is an integrated government that works across agency boundaries to serve citizens better.

Among the notable accomplishments under iGov 2010, the government is revamping its SINGOV Government Information (gov.sg) portal and has enhanced its platform for a single SMS number for the whole government, as planned. With the enhanced SMS platform built, the government has already added a number of interesting services. For example, it has used SMS to send more than 35,000 students the results of their "joint admissions exercise" to allow them to determine far more quickly which polytechnic or

junior college has accepted them. In another example, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA), in collaboration with the Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) of Singapore, developed the WISEPORT project, which provides mobile wireless broadband network access to ships within Singapore's southern coastline. Activities, such as regulatory filings, broadband communication and real-time access to navigational data can now take place offshore.

Also in the area of cross-government, multi-channel service, the Singaporean government launched additional Citizen Connect Centers (bringing the total to 28 at the time of our research) to provide a range of assisted e-services across a number of different government agencies through conveniently located walk-in offices. The Citizen Connect Centers have achieved levels of customer satisfaction exceeding 90 percent and there is evidence of demand for more centers to be set up. Correspondingly, in our citizen survey, we saw a significant increase in the number of people who feel it is fairly or very easy to interact with the government through walk-in

centers—up from 63 percent in 2007 to 77 percent in 2008. In addition, more than two-thirds of Singaporeans (69 percent) reported that they feel their government is either fairly or very effective at collaborating to meet the needs of citizens.

To encourage greater uptake of e-services and improve equality of access, the IDA is investing SGD 43 million in programs that ensure that frequently isolated segments of the population (such as the elderly, disabled, poor and poorly educated) can acquire IT literacy skills. Among the more innovative of the initiatives, the Silver Infocomm Initiative teaches the elderly simple digital lifestyle skills, such as how to make video calls over the Internet and how to use Wireless@SG access. The Neu PC Plus program and the iNSPIRE Fund have been established to provide needy families with school-going children with a personal computer and broadband access.

The iNSPIRE Fund program strikes us as a particularly innovative and wonderful example of a working social ecosystem model. Through it, needy students can render 6 to 12 of hours of community service (depending on the child's age)—such as helping out in homes for the elderly—in order to receive a fully paid desktop PC through IDA's subsidy and the iNSPIRE Fund. The children's teachers or the staff of the voluntary welfare organizations must endorse the community service records and send them to the Singapore Children's Society for processing.

Singapore has been a leader in customer service in our research for years, and perhaps not surprisingly, its historical strength is reflected in the positive attitudes of its citizens toward the job their government is doing. Singaporeans held more positive opinions about their government's performance than the citizens of any other country in our citizen survey (where we examined government's trust building activities for its citizens, based on eight parameters.) Additionally, the percentage of Singaporeans with negative opinions about their government's performance never exceeded 17 percent in any of these eight categories.

Interestingly, one area where Singapore scored low was in the area of citizen

participation in political and social life. In our citizen survey, only 39 percent of Singaporean respondents reported participating in some facet of political or social life (beyond voting in elections)—the lowest percentage among all 21 countries. The results are surprising, given the recent strong emphasis on the Singaporean government's Public Service 21 movement, which stresses the importance of becoming more engaged with the public to adapt to changing conditions and meet the needs and expectations of an increasingly sophisticated and demanding Singapore society. Certainly, the Singaporean government has recognized the role an active and engaged citizenry would play in building national consensus and enabling the government to serve the people better.

That is not to say that the government is not providing its citizens with opportunities to engage with it in priority setting, designing or delivering services. For example, the government's Reach Portal invites members of the public to participate in feedback/polling, online discussions, blogging, consultation channels and online e-town hall chats. In another example, four agencies—the Ministry of National Development, Ministry of Information Communications and Arts, People's Association and Singapore Sports Council—participated in a citizen e-engagement initiative that enabled all four of these communities' portals with a suite of social collaboration tools including blogs, discussion forums, events calendars, chat, photo galleries, podcasts and video-cast facilities. These tools provide agencies with the capabilities to build online communities for citizen-to-citizen interactions.

Singaporeans already have a fairly high level of trust in their government's ability to provide them with a higher quality of life (69 percent of Singaporeans in our survey said they have either some or a lot of trust in their government in this regard.) Presumably, this trust has been built on their government's historical performance—an active desire to improve and the ability to push improvements through fairly aggressively. We believe that the Singaporean government now needs to address the causes of citizens'

seeming disengagement in their own governance. The public is satisfied, but not truly involved. Without greater participation of the citizenry, the Singaporean government will not be able to ensure that its policies and practices are designed to achieve outcomes that truly matter to citizens, and are delivered in a way that really meets their individual needs.



South Africa

Capital

Pretoria

Latitude/Longitude

29°S 24°W

Population

43,786,115

Currency

Rand (ZAR)

Land area

1,219,912 sq km

In his February 2008 address, President Thabo Mbeki announced a renewed commitment to improving government service delivery in South Africa. For now, the Batho Pele Revitalization Program remains the government-wide strategy to deliver better services to citizens and businesses. Among the more notable recent developments, a Public Service Summit was planned for September 2008 to discuss the Single Public Service and its ultimate goal of ensuring coherent governance within and between all spheres of government. A call to participate in the summit was issued to every citizen and business in South Africa. Rather than an effort to centralize government control, the Single Public Service is intended to be a strategic policy framework for promoting accessibility and harmonizing government service across the national, provincial and local levels.

While the South African government has sometimes been criticized for not providing opportunities for citizen engagement, the main issues often relate to citizens' lack of access to facilities and use of available forms of communication. To stimulate greater citizen participation

in government decision making, the South African government has instituted a number of measures. Among these, the Imbizo initiative stands out as an innovative program of interaction.

First launched in 2001, Imbizo is a face-to-face forum for enhancing dialog between government and the people. It also encourages South Africans to become active participants in the social transformation process. Senior government officials discuss issues directly with communities and listen to their unique problems and constraints at Imbizo focus weeks. Presidential Imbizos give communities an opportunity to raise their concerns directly, in the presence of the president, the premier, members of the provincial executive council, mayors and others (in other words, with all three levels of government at the same time). Attendance at Imbizos tends to be high and the program serves as an interesting model for building truly tangible government-citizen connections.

As we have witnessed in a number of other countries, South Africans' current attitudes toward the job their government is doing in areas related to

building trust is fairly poor. In fact, South African respondents were more likely to hold negative than positive opinions on their government's performance in every one of the eight areas we examined (government being open and transparent about how it makes policy decisions; being accountable for what it achieves; informing citizens about policies and services; targeting resources to people who need them; providing equal access to government services for all citizens; seeking the opinions of its citizens; tailoring services to meet individual needs; and, overall, delivering a better quality of life for respondents and their families). Most of these eight performance areas received more than twice the number of negative than positive ratings from South African respondents.

South Africa faces many challenges in building and linking a robust customer service agenda to citizen trust, not least measuring the impact of change in government services. However, the government has begun to recognize that measuring performance strictly against financials, or even outputs, is insufficient to create service programs that deliver meaningful social outcomes. To that end, the South African government is making attempts to implement and measure improvements to service delivery as a whole: Service Delivery Improvement Plans (SDIPs) are now available at a national department and provincial level. For now, SDIPs face implementation problems, as they may contain desired outcomes but, they are not required to be implemented. Nor do many government departments have the systems in place to measure the outcomes of service delivery.

Last year, we noted in our *Leadership in Customer Service* study that given the relatively low penetration of Internet among its population, the South African government needed to rely more heavily on alternate channels, particularly mobile technologies. In fact, we did find evidence this year of some innovative programs that take advantage of short message service (SMS). The Dokoza health pilot—which is a joint project between the South African State Information Technology Agency, the Center for Public Service Innovation and the CSIR/Meraka Institute—uses SMS. The pilot included capabilities for

registering a patient; enabling health workers to check prescriptions; obtaining blood test results from the National Health Laboratory Service; obtaining patient history and reminding patients about treatment take-up and next appointment. The Dokoza system pilot demonstrated the large potential that mobile technologies have in assisting government with improving services and increasing citizen convenience.

South Africa faces a challenging road to achieving leadership in customer service. The changing political environment and a general lack of citizen confidence are likely to weigh heavily on efforts to improve. Nevertheless, as it grapples with these larger "environmental" issues, the government cannot afford to lose sight of the role a robust citizen service can play in building bridges between government and those it governs. In fact, the current environment makes the call for improving service to citizens—and by extension, building greater trust and citizen engagement—louder than ever for the South African government.



Spain

Capital
Madrid

Latitude/Longitude
40°N 4°W

Population
40,491,051

Currency
Euro (EUR)

Land area
504,782 sq km

In Spain's most recent national elections, held in March 2008, the Socialist party retained power, paving the way for the smooth continuation of a number of customer service initiatives already in progress for the past several years. Not surprisingly, given the continuity in government, we did not find many changes in terms of Spain's strategy for citizen service over the past year. The most significant development we saw was the adoption of the country's new Electronic Administration Law, which we first described as under development in last year's *Leadership in Customer Service* report.

The aim of this new law is to enhance government efficiency by doing away with the need to present paper documents to authorities, to promote "closeness to the citizen and administrative transparency" and, more generally, to contribute to the development of e-government. The law officially recognizes citizens' right to communicate electronically with public administrations—in other words, to conduct their administrative business through electronic means, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. State authorities

must facilitate these interactions by preparing their systems to be able to provide all services through diverse channels, such as the Internet and television. The law, which is expected to come into force among all public administration authorities by December 2009, establishes basic principles for the use of information technologies between citizens and the administration, as well as across administrative authorities (central, regional and local).

Under the law, citizens have the right not to have to provide any data that is already in public authorities' possession. This provision should act as a strong driver of greater cross-government collaboration. In fact, the Spanish government expects that full-fledged adoption of the law should lead to the creation of new and more sophisticated government services that overcome traditional administrative silos. In this regard, the effects of the Electronic Administration Law will be well worth watching, as currently nearly half (47 percent) of all Spanish respondents in our citizen survey considered their government to be either not very effective or not at all effective at

working together to meet the needs of its citizens.

As we have noted in previous years' *Leadership in Customer Service* reports, insufficient communication continues to hinder the Spanish government from building a stronger relationship with its citizens. Of the 21 countries we surveyed, Spanish citizens were the second least likely (after Japanese citizens) to feel well informed about the performance of their government. While 34 percent consider themselves fairly or very well informed, 65 percent consider themselves not very well or not at all informed. While we saw few new initiatives to promote a better understanding of the workings of government during the past year, the government has expressed an awareness of the importance of this issue and is currently working to develop a strong citizen communication plan.

Not surprisingly, this feeling of being ill-informed colors Spaniards' other attitudes about their government in important ways. When questioned about their feelings toward the government's openness and transparency in informing about policy decisions, 44 percent of respondents had a negative attitude, while only 17 percent had a positive one.

Given the strong correlation between citizens feeling informed and being engaged in political and social life (key ingredients to building strong social ecosystems that drive positive outcomes) that we discovered in our survey, the Spanish government would do well to focus greater attention in this area. Outside of participating in elections, Spaniards reported themselves as fairly disengaged from political and local community and voluntary activities (particularly in comparison to most other citizens in our survey).

We did find some evidence of the government working to encourage greater citizen participation in government; however, the examples were isolated. At a national level, the implementation plan of the new Electronic Administration Law describes an initiative called Citizen Participation, which aims to enhance the degree of citizen participation in public life and advance the joint design of public services in order to meet the real needs

of service recipients. The plan is expected to be developed before the end of 2008 and implemented in 2009. However, at present, the success and impact of this plan on public engagement remain hypothetical. A more tangible national-level example is the 060 portal (060.es), which has a section to promote citizenship participation through surveys, forums and interviews. For now, however, participation levels are low.

Currently, one of the most successful initiatives in Spain is at the local level. The Madrid Participa project of the Council of Madrid is increasing citizen participation in the decision-making processes by offering a more dynamic and continuous dialog between political representatives and citizens. In addition, the Madrid Participa approach of using secure electronic voting technology in parallel with the paper channel enables the Madrid City Council to carry out more convenient and user-friendly consultations while avoiding the costs of traditional voting. This e-consultations platform has been used in 22 instances and has involved more than 3.5 million citizens, demonstrating the potential of e-government not only as a channel of service delivery, but also of true citizen engagement.

As the Spanish government looks to improve its customer service in the future, collaboration at all levels—across government, with citizens and with non-governmental groups of all types—will be important. Right now, only 24 percent of Spanish citizens consider their government effective at working with non-governmental organizations to improve their overall quality of life, pointing to a tremendous potential for growing the social ecosystems that can foster trust, improve the relevance of government decision making and share responsibility for genuinely improving people's quality of life.



Sweden

Capital

Stockholm

Latitude/Longitude

62°N 15°E

Population

9,045,389

Currency

Swedish krona (SEK)

Land area

449,964 sq km

During the past year, Sweden experienced no major events likely to affect the progress of its service agenda. In January 2008, the Government minister, Mats Odell, presented the Action Plan for eGovernance (Handlingsplan för eFörvaltning), which outlines four key areas in need of reform in order for the government to fulfill the goals of its e-government strategy. Last year, we mentioned Sweden's increased emphasis on more definitive targets and, indeed, the four areas outlined in the Action Plan establish action points and the government departments responsible for them—although they establish very few deadlines. As a follow-up, Verva, the Swedish Administrative Development Agency, is developing guidelines for how 70 selected government agencies should report their progress in implementing the Action Plan.

We noted in last year's *Leadership in Customer Service* report that coordinated multi-channel access appears to be one of Sweden's weaker areas in customer service. This year, we found no evidence of new strategies to coordinate channels of interaction; however, the government acknowledges both the importance of

agencies using different service channels and the need for cross-agency, multi-channel strategies for cases and services that involve numerous agencies.

To this end, one intra-government development worth noting is that in April 2008, the government proposed legislation to allow a number of its agencies to exchange information electronically in the future (as opposed to in-person or on the phone) when deciding on social aid and other types of money transfers from the state to citizens; the goal is to reduce the number of incorrect payments. For government-to-citizen interactions, Verva has issued agencies with a series of guidelines about ways to enable access to their services through different channels (for instance, online, mobile phones and PDAs). It has also been encouraging agencies to investigate ways to coordinate the different channels.

More specifically, the government has opened the possibility of a government-wide call center and national phone number for the public administration. The concept has already taken root at a narrower level: for example,

Försäkringskassan (The Swedish Social Insurance Agency) is currently consolidating its local call centers into five national centers operating under one phone number. With respect to face-to-face service, in May 2007, the government began an investigation (expected to be completed by November 2008) into the necessary steps to support national government agencies in developing local service offices. The National Tax Board and the National Social Insurance Board have already launched more than 82 common offices; and approximately 40 more are expected to open by the end of 2008.

Last year, we noted that the Swedish government in general enjoyed the confidence of its citizens. This year, likewise, our citizen survey showed that Swedes continue to hold generally positive feelings about the job their government is doing in a number of areas related to building trust. In six of eight areas, Swedish respondents were more likely to be positive than negative in their attitudes about government including: government being accountable for what it achieves; informing citizens about policies and services; targeting resources to people who need them; providing equal access to government services for all citizens; tailoring services to meet individual needs; and, perhaps most importantly, delivering a better quality of life. In this last area, after taking everything into consideration, 58 percent of Swedes reported that they had some or a lot of trust in their government to improve the quality of their lives—placing Sweden, on this metric, in the top one-third of all 21 countries we surveyed.

Interestingly, the two areas where Swedes were more likely to hold negative than positive opinions about their government were the areas of the government seeking the opinions of its citizens, and of being open and transparent about how it makes policy decisions.

Sweden has a very long tradition of working to improve transparency in the public sector. For example, Swedish citizens have had the right of access to official documents for several hundred years. The Principle of Public Access sets out that all individuals, whether citizens of Sweden or of another country, have

the right to read official documents (with very few exceptions). However, although citizens have the right to access official documents, the government could probably do more to facilitate this process. We are, in fact, seeing moves in that direction. For example, previously, citizens interested in these documents received printed material by mail or collected the documents at a local agency. Now, all agencies are required to send information electronically if possible and are only to send printed material as a last solution. This change was driven partly by a desire to improve services to citizens and partly as a result of the Swedish government's environmental policy. We will watch with interest to see if this improvement leads to citizens exercising their rights of access more regularly.

In terms of seeking citizen input into government decision making, few found little evidence of the government providing opportunities for citizens to interact with politicians or government agencies at a national level in our research. For example, citizens do not have the opportunity to interact with or comment on parliamentary debates or national commissions.

At a lower level of governance, the decentralized Swedish system leaves the responsibility for seeking citizen input in the hands of individual agencies/governments. Although few agencies or local/regional governments have developed very innovative solutions, we found a few exceptions. Among these, the National Tax Board created a blog to collect feedback from its public sector and private sector customers, as it further developed its website.

The blog started with a description of the project in April 2007 and continued with information related to the start-up of the project, information gathering, user tests, target group analysis, prototype presentations, and so on, until the project closed with a final report in December 2007. During this period, the website development group presented screen shots of the prototypes in development and asked people to comment. Although not many people chose to visit the blog, the project can be considered a success since it was among the first of its type to explore the use of Web 2.0 tool for government-citizen

collaboration. The City of Stockholm launched a similar blog in January 2008 to direct the development of its own website, with some enhancements (such as small-scale competitions, for example) to encourage citizen participation.

Going forward, Sweden's greatest areas of opportunity for leadership in customer service seem to lie in building mechanisms for greater citizen engagement. Greater citizen involvement will be essential if the Swedish government is to determine the citizen outcomes it wants to prioritize and measure. (In our research, we found little evidence of the Swedish government currently taking an outcome-based approach to measurement.) The Swedish citizenry express a fair propensity to be involved. More than half of the respondents in our citizen survey reported having participated in one or more aspects of political or community life during the past year (beyond voting in elections). Likewise, citizens' current dissatisfaction with their existing ability to provide input points to a real need for the government to develop these channels as a first step toward increasing shared responsibility for governance, and ultimately defining and achieving the most important social outcomes.



United Kingdom

Capital

London

Latitude/Longitude

54°N 2°E

Population

60,943,912

Currency

British pound (GBP)

Land area

244,820 sq km

During the past year, two principle events have affected the United Kingdom's service agenda: Gordon Brown's arrival as prime minister (and his subsequent efforts to rebuild broader enthusiasm for his premiership) and challenges to the economy, which may restrict future government investment.

The cornerstone of the UK government's overall service strategy remains the Transformational Government Strategy, which was first articulated in November 2005. The strategy addresses the elements of leadership in customer service: citizen-centric, multi-channel, cross-government services promoted through proactive communications and education. The Service Transformation Agreement—published alongside the Comprehensive Spending Review in late 2007—adds another layer of detail to the strategy by identifying the entity responsible for taking forward the various strands of public service reform. The principles of transformational government, all enabled by IT, are at the heart of the government's vision, which has been described as "a better service for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the taxpayer."

The IT aspect of transformation took on elevated importance under Tom Watson, the new minister responsible for IT-enabled public-service reform. Watson has aligned the Transformational Government Strategy with a "government 2.0" proposal (emphasizing the potential of new technologies for engaging citizens), first outlined in 2007 in an attention-getting report titled *The Power of Information*. The timing for this alignment may be just right. For years, the UK government had struggled with seeming citizen disillusionment with online government services. However, in our 2008 citizen survey we saw a very significant increase in the number of British citizens who said it was fairly or very easy to contact the government via the Internet (88 percent in 2008 versus 57 percent in 2007), pointing to a growing ease among the population with using non-traditional methods for their government interactions.

We feel that the challenge for the UK government, however, is to translate this result into improved citizen perceptions. In seven out of eight areas related to the government's performance toward building trust with its citizens,

British respondents in our survey were significantly more likely to hold negative rather than positive attitudes about the job their government was doing. In only one area—providing equal access to government services for all citizens—were respondents' responses more likely to be positive (43 percent) than negative (34 percent).

In our research, we uncovered several programs that provide opportunities for public engagement by making use of technology. Among these, one of the most interesting initiatives has been e-petitions (located on the prime minister's website (petitions.number10.gov.uk)). The innovative e-petitions site allows any user to create a petition (within certain guidelines) and then encourage others to approve it. The program is already encouraging citizens to speak their minds on a diverse array of topics; at the time of our research, some of the most popular open petitions included a petition to reduce the tax on petrol and diesel by 20 pence per liter and a petition to stop Internet service providers from breaching customers' privacy via advertising technologies.

The e-petitions program has attracted considerable media attention (particularly when citizens have put forward petitions about controversial political issues) and it demonstrates the potential power of such programs to initiate national debate on certain issues, as well as to draw more citizens into active political life. Interestingly, UK citizens were the second most likely group (behind Australians) among all 21 countries we surveyed, to report that they had participated in political life during the past year by signing a petition (with 38 percent of UK citizens reporting they had participated through this means).

The UK government has also conducted more formal consultation exercises, in which it has actively sought the public's views on particular policy areas. For example, the government's consultation on the future role of nuclear power in a low-carbon UK economy (conducted from May to November 2007) included both face-to-face and online channels. In total 2,728 people and organizations submitted a response to the consultation, either online (2,043) or by mail/email (685). In addition, more

than a thousand individuals participated in deliberative events and community meetings across the country.

The nuclear power consultation is just one of many examples of the UK government's consultative approaches, which have covered topics ranging from the future of the National Health Service to ways to tackle rising knife and gun crime. The UK government has truly embraced citizen engagement and found novel ways to go about it. A case in point is citizen juries, which bring together panels of 12 to 20 citizens representing a particular community to deliberate on given topics for a half or full day, hearing from expert witnesses, before coming to collective decisions. However, these efforts have been greeted with some skepticism, particularly from the opposition and the media, who are concerned that these consultations are simply public relations exercises or "empty listening" and do not influence policy or services. Others fear that their small scale may, paradoxically, make decision making less democratic, instead of more.

Disappointingly then, in citizens' minds, two of the UK government's weakest areas when it comes to building trust include being open and transparent about how it makes policy decisions (65 percent holding negative views) and seeking the opinions of its citizens (60 percent negative). Perhaps the UK government needs to focus on communicating better the efforts it is making to seek citizens' opinions and demonstrating how the citizen's voice is truly being heard and acted upon.

Under its Transformational Government Strategy, the UK government is putting in place important elements of leadership in customer service; which should, over time, lead to a better service experience. The strategy supports the concepts of building customer centricity and cross-channel delivery, by stating that services enabled by IT must be designed around the citizen and not the provider, and provided through coordinated delivery channels. It promotes increased collaboration among government entities, through shared services and other initiatives. Finally, it outlines specific ways to improve proactive communication and education (for example, through a government

plan to offer to its citizens ICT training that emphasizes the ability to access government services).

We feel that what are still undeveloped are the additional mechanisms for turning citizen-centricity into something bigger than well-designed individual services—namely, an overall better relationship between citizens and their government that promotes working cooperatively to identify and build broad, positive societal outcomes. These mechanisms most notably include fostering greater citizen engagement in structuring governmental policies. The UK government should now pay greater attention to ensuring its citizens play a more active role in shaping their own governance.



United States

Capital

Washington DC

Latitude/Longitude

38°N 97°W

Population

303,824,646

Currency

US dollar (USD)

Land area

9,826,630 sq km

The United States continues to undergo a period of significant change in its political and fiscal environment, which is likely to have dramatic implications for the country's future service agenda.

Ongoing economic unease from the national credit crunch and collapse of the housing market, coupled with the strain of the long-term military engagement overseas, has engendered a feeling of national anxiety. As a result, the close presidential race fostered a much higher level of citizen involvement in politics than the United States has seen in recent history.

Against this backdrop (and in the last year of the existing administration), few notable changes have occurred in the US government's service strategy and action plan since last year's *Leadership in Customer Service* report. The President's Management Agenda (PMA), first announced in the summer of 2001, continues to drive improvements to the management of the federal government—including ensuring that the government's US\$60 billion annual investment in information technology significantly improves the government's ability to serve citizens. More

specifically, the PMA encompasses many initiatives that build on the pillars of leadership in customer service: citizen-centric, cross-government and multi-channel programs.

Among the larger initiatives that we have discussed in previous years' *Leadership in Customer Service* reports is that the US government's Lines of Business (LoBs) continue to urge agencies to move to the shared-service model, an important enabler of cross-government collaboration and cost savings. However, at the time of this research, no cabinet-level agencies had committed to transfer their operations to the agency-run centers, and some have expressed doubt that the model can support their needs. Nevertheless, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has not wavered in its commitment to a "one government" management agenda, and we discovered evidence of continued strength in cross-government collaboration.

For example, nearly all federal agencies now participate in e-payroll, which has led to a 40 percent drop in annual federal payroll-processing costs. In

an example across different levels of government, NYC Access is a free online portal in New York City that connects citizens to various government agencies including the Internal Revenue Service, the Housing Authority, Department of Education and Department of Labor, allowing residents to determine for themselves if they can qualify for housing assistance, food stamps or other city programs.

In five of the eight areas that we surveyed that were related to government building trust with its citizens, US respondents were more likely to have positive than negative opinions. These areas include government informing citizens about policies and services; targeting resources to people who need them; providing equal access to government services for all citizens; tailoring services to meet individual needs; and overall, delivering a better quality of life. The three areas where US respondents were more likely to hold more negative than positive opinions include government being open and transparent about how it makes policy decisions; being accountable for what it achieves; and seeking the opinions of its citizens.

Certainly, transparency and accountability have gained extra attention with the passage of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act and the subsequent launch, in December 2007, of a website called USA Spending.gov that details federal spending on contracts and grants. Similar state efforts to increase transparency have also been launched recently. We will watch with interest the effects of these initiatives on public perception as they gain traction and enter into the broader public consciousness.

While Americans express a desire for greater transparency into the political decision-making process, 69 percent of Americans feel fairly or very well informed about how their government is performing—a positive percentage second only to Singaporeans (at 73 percent). Supporting the correlation we found between citizens feeling well-informed and citizens being actively engaged, Americans report very strong personal involvement in political and social life. Fifty-seven percent of

American respondents in our citizen survey reported having taken part in a local community or voluntary activity during the past twelve months—the second highest rate of participation (behind Norwegians, at 60 percent) in the 21 countries we surveyed.

Interestingly, only 46 percent of American respondents in our survey felt that their government is effective at working with non-governmental organizations to improve their quality of life. These results represent a large opportunity for US government improvement. Americans' willingness to become involved in their communities points to a favorable disposition for building the social ecosystems that lead to improved social outcomes. By fostering even greater connections, not just among citizens and non-governmental organizations, but also among government entities and non-governmental organizations, the US government will capitalize on one of the country's inherent strengths.

In fact, we found some highly innovative examples of these types of connections at work across the United States in various states, municipalities and the federal government. For example, the Massachusetts Health Data Consortium operates a regional collaborative initiative called MA-SHARE, which seeks to promote the exchange of health care data using information technology, standards and administrative simplification, to make accurate clinical health information available wherever needed, in an efficient, cost-effective and safe manner. MA-SHARE's advisory committee and executive sub-committee consist of private-public representatives from Massachusetts' state government, public hospitals, physicians, health plans, health care organizations, technology associations and other stakeholders. Regional health information exchange efforts like MA-SHARE, which embody cross-boundary collaboration, are developing throughout the country.

As the United States contemplates the future of customer service and citizen engagement, it does so in a tremendously uncertain environment. Regardless of the eventual outcome of current events, at least some of the US government's next steps seem clear. Chief among those is harnessing

the experience and vast resources of the country's strong social ecosystem. By growing these connections, the country will improve its ability to deliver complex, cross-cutting outcomes that meet citizens' needs—even as long-term fiscal constraints continue to limit the government's ability to deliver such outcomes on its own.

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An aerial photograph of a brick-paved plaza. The bricks are laid in a herringbone pattern. A white dove is captured in flight in the center of the image. In the lower portion, three people are walking: a woman in a dark top and pants, a small child in a yellow and white shirt, and a woman in a purple jacket and white pants. The image is split horizontally by a thin orange line.

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