

GovLoop Pocket Guide  
2016

The background of the entire page is a solid, vibrant red. Overlaid on this background are numerous black silhouettes of people in various poses, some walking, some standing, and some interacting. The silhouettes are scattered across the page, creating a sense of movement and activity. The text is overlaid on the right side of the page, with the words 'Breaking Down' and 'What You' appearing in a lighter shade of red, while the other words are in white.

# Customer Service 101: Breaking Down What You Need to Know

**It's about agencies  
providing customers with  
services that are equal  
to the best that private  
companies can offer**



# Foreword from Oracle

People are increasingly mobile. You can think of this in a couple of different ways. Certainly mobile technologies are changing profoundly the way people interact one-to-one as well as with groups and organizations. But “mobile” also reflects people deciding where to reside. In 2016, well into the information age, you can take a new job hundreds or thousands of miles away and have the option to not go but stay. On the other hand, people every day seek and select employment based on where they want to live – not necessarily pre-filtering on where they actually live.

The ease and speed of transportation and communication make all of this possible. We the people are highly empowered with mobile and social.

In the commercial world these trends have driven businesses to transform consumer engagement. They enable consumers to request service, to complain, to get help, and get information anytime, anywhere, any way that best meets their needs. Social media has also empowered consumers to openly share with their sphere of social influence where services fall short. And because of social influence, businesses must be tuned in, sensitive and active across social media.

The challenge for government and agencies at all levels is similar: empower citizens to request service, to complain, to get help, to get information easily on their channel of choice - or lose public opinion and support, each of which are key to moving agendas forward.

“Cloud-based technologies designed to facilitate engagement give governments a way to create a virtually 24/7, online, transparent civic space that is highly informative, participative, collaborative and responsive to citizens.”

—David Terry



On the positive side, there is a lot agencies can do and have done to mobilize civic spirit and activity. Cloud-based technologies designed to facilitate engagement give governments a way to create a virtually 24/7, online, transparent civic space that is highly informative, participative, collaborative and responsive to citizens.

So while government agencies have the pressure of meeting ever-escalating expectations, they are increasingly aided by modern tools. The “doubling” and miniaturization effects described by Moore’s Law do not just simply inflate expectations by creating a rapidly transforming consumer experience. These developments simultaneously produce affordable technologies capable of transforming the ways citizens engage businesses and government.

Today you can expect that customer and citizen engagement technologies come together in coherent, comprehensive platforms that are configurable for government, easily integrated with your existing systems, highly secure and certified to the highest standards.

Use this pocket guide to read about some of the specific ways in which digital engagement technology meets practical citizen needs. And you’ll understand how government agencies can compose these technologies to create a modern citizen experience.

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "David Terry".

**David Terry**  
Sales Consulting Director,  
Oracle Public Sector

# MODERNIZING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Oracle Customer Experience Solutions  
Deliver 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Services



## Connected Citizens

Today's connected citizens have more control at their fingertips than any other time in history. Citizens decide how, when and where they want to engage with government — through web content, on mobile devices or over a variety of social channels. Citizens also expect government to recognize them and use their past interactions to offer a personalized experience.

## Modern Interactions

Oracle Customer Experience (CX) solutions enable government to deliver interactions that rival the best modern consumer capabilities, such as services that are optimized for mobile devices and tailored for simplicity. These solutions support personalized interactions, spanning automated self-service to assisted service across multiple channels, including chat, email, social networks and text. And it's all delivered from an adaptable, integrated platform.

## Knowledge is Power

Oracle also provides knowledge tools, which can be embedded into an agency's existing systems and websites to help citizens and employees conduct transactions quickly and accurately. Whether in one-on-one scenarios or via social communities, agencies can learn from each interaction and tailor content to maximize effectiveness. The result is real-time, relevant insights at every touch point.

## INNOVATIVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WITH ORACLE CX

**Connected Citizen Journey:** From initial contact to resolution, guide citizens through their government interactions.

**Better, Faster Decisions:** Use a comprehensive citizen view, analytics and social media insights to improve decision-making.

**Availability and Consistency:** Operate anytime, on any device, from anywhere, using any platform — including social media — for seamless, omni-channel experiences.

**Modern Government:** Modernize your agency's business with integrated mobile, social and analytic technologies to exceed rapidly evolving citizen expectations.

# ORACLE®

To learn more, visit: [www.oracle.com/CX](http://www.oracle.com/CX)

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# Executive Summary

Take a minute and think about the last time you visited your favorite restaurant, website, brick-and-mortar retailer or coffee shop. What comes to mind?

Is it the barista who remembered what you ordered the morning before, the personalized email you received with special deals based on your online shopping preferences or the free meal you got with your loyalty rewards points?

This is only a short list of the personal touches companies use to woo us, connect with us and ultimately keep us coming back to them. They understand that consumers have grown accustomed to ordering items online with same-day delivery and getting reliable rides in minutes without hailing a cab or swiping a credit card.

The most successful companies not only meet but exceed our expectations for timely, personalized and professional services. For them, good customer service is good business. If this is true in the corporate world, why should government be any different?

If you think about it, government is a collection of many small and large enterprises that provide a range of vital services, such as emergency response,

social services, benefits, health care and much more. In many ways, the taxpayers who fund these services are much like the paying customers who do business with the Ubers and Airbnbs of the world.

Although many government employees treat citizens like customers, part of the challenge is figuring out how to improve upon what they're already doing.

That's why we have this guide — to help you overcome those hurdles.

## Who is this guide for?

Whether you're new to government or you are a long-tenured public servant, this quick resource guide will help you better understand customer service excellence, including what it means, what it entails and who's doing it well. We will also provide practical tips for improving the experience for all customers.

Bonus: This document can serve as a convenient handout for your colleagues who are always asking you to explain why customer service matters to them.

So let's get started. First up: An overview of customer service in government.

# Overview: Customer Service in Gov

In this section, we'll define the meaning of customer service in government, briefly describe a few success stories and help set the context for why customer service in government matters today more than ever.

## Who Is the Customer?

Customers are individuals or entities that a department or agency serves directly. They may be citizens, businesses, other agencies or internal employees.

## What is customer service?

Customer service in government is about making it faster and easier for individuals and businesses to complete transactions and receive quality services.

In a nutshell, it's about agencies providing customers with services that are equal to the best that private companies can offer. That means giving customers accurate and timely information and services when they need them and in the format that best meets their needs – digital, in person or over the phone.

Keep in mind that customers aren't limited to citizens and businesses. They also include other agencies and internal customers, or employees.

**"Providing high-quality internal customer service can improve the ability of an agency to satisfy external customers," according to the Office of Personnel Management. "Organizations with excellent external and poor internal customer service are often performing on the edge of acceptability."**

## What's the big deal?

**"Despite some important strides to improve customer service over the past 15 years, many federal government services fail to meet the expectations of citizens and businesses, creating unnecessary hassle and cost for citizens, businesses and the government itself"**

The preceding is an excerpt from a 2015 progress report on the federal government's efforts to improve customer service. There's a lot to be gained from creating a better customer service experience. For you, it means less stress, more productivity and a better work environment. Plus, no agency wants bad public relations for a botched service or subpar customer service.

And don't forget that better service leads to more empowered and satisfied customers, which in turn means less handholding on your part and smoother transactions that require fewer internal resources to complete.

It's a win-win for everyone. But the work doesn't stop there.

**"Improving the experience that federal customers have is not an end in itself,"** said Rick Parrish, a Senior Analyst at Forrester Research who specializes in customer service. **"It is a means to a greater end. And that greater end is primarily mission success!"**

# What's happening in customer service right now?

Citizen customers today are far more tech-savvy than they were a decade ago, and they expect to interact with agencies through myriad communications channels, including phone, email, the Web, mobile devices and social media.

To meet those expectations, many agencies are raising their standards and changing the way they do business to meet customers' expectations. The federal government, for example, has formed digital-oriented organizations such as 18F and U.S. Digital Service to help agencies build better and more intuitive services for citizens. So far, 18F has worked with federal agencies to modernize online immigration and visa processes, help contracting personnel estimate their per-hour labor costs for a contract, make it easier for potential college students to find schools that are the best fit for them, and much more.

State and local governments are also making powerful advances in delivering improved services. The City of Los Angeles has taken notable strides in citizen engagement that has

earned attention and awards from e.Republic and others. Notable developments include a mobile Web app and portal initiative called My LA 311 that offers access to government services and information anytime, anywhere.

On the heels of this, Los Angeles has launched a mobile application called Go LA that offers citizens a fully inter-modal trip planning platform, one that calculates anticipated elapsed times as well as cost trade-offs, "green" choice values, and much more. These award-winning initiatives are notable for their broad and long-term focus on and the payback that comes from quality-of-life improvement and citizen engagement.

The city and county of San Francisco developed a Business Portal to help people start, manage and grow their businesses. The website clarifies the steps to compliance; provides easier access to licenses, permits and requirements; and offers a wealth of resources.

These are just a few examples. We will explore other case studies later on in this guide.

## Help Wanted: Making the Pitch to Get Your Team Excited About Customer Service

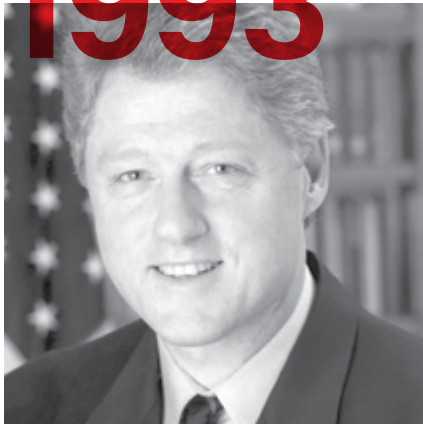
"Every day, millions of people interact with the American government. We apply for Social Security benefits and small business loans. We look for affordable health insurance and financial aid. We need passports and tax refunds. Too often, these interactions can be frustrating and cumbersome because of outdated tools and unreliable systems. We believe that government is ready for a change.

This is where you come in. We need people like you to take on these high-stakes challenges, to apply the skills and practices you've honed to untangle problems and simplify solutions for millions of Americans. We need you. Are you up for the challenge?"

— U.S. Digital Service

# Then and now: customer service in review

## 1993

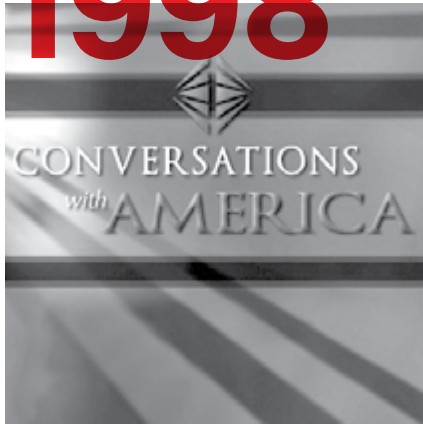


**March 1993:** President Bill Clinton announced a six-month review of the federal government to identify problems and offer solutions and ideas for savings in key areas, including personnel, procurement and budget policies.

**September 1993:** Clinton issued Executive Order 12862, which set a goal for federal agencies to deliver customer services that equal the best in the private sector.

**September 1994:** This deadline set by Executive Order 12862 required agencies to publish a customer service plan that included customer service standards and described future plans for customer surveys.

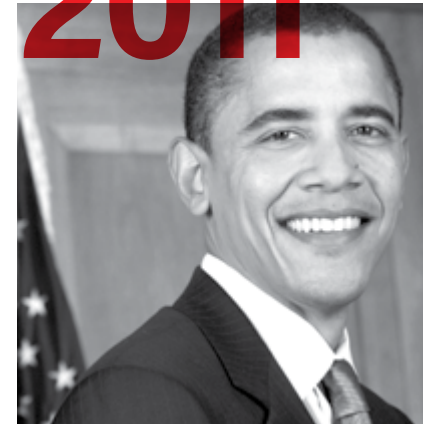
## 1998



**March 1995:** Clinton issued a memo for heads of executive departments and agencies that addressed the second phase of reinventing government. In it, he advised them to integrate customer service measures with other performance initiatives and to align employee appraisal and recognition programs with a customer focus.

**March 1998:** A new initiative called Conversations with America was launched to help agencies to discover what is most important to their customers and what the federal government can do to meet their expectations.

## 2011



**January 2011:** President Barack Obama signed the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010. The law set clear customer service standards and expectations, including, where appropriate, performance goals for customer service. The act also established Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) goals to accelerate progress on a limited number of presidential priority areas that require collaboration across multiple agencies.

**April 27, 2011:** Obama issued Executive Order 13571, requiring each agency to develop a customer service plan that identified implementation steps for their customer service activities, including a "signature initiative" that used technology to improve customer experience.

## 2014



**June 2014:** The General Services Administration became the first federal agency to appoint a Chief Customer Officer. CCOs are responsible for incorporating customer feedback into processes and product development across an agency.

**Present:** Customer service was one of 15 CAP goals announced in the president's fiscal 2015 budget. Each goal has an action plan and milestones to gauge progress over a four-year timeframe.



# How citizens rate government customer service

Nothing beats hearing directly from the citizens about their experiences. We pulled some numbers from the [2015 American Customer Satisfaction Index Federal Government report](#), and here's what we found:

- On a scale of zero to 100, satisfaction with government customer service (specifically, courteousness and professionalism of agency staff) increased slightly from 75 in 2014 to 76 in 2015. That's a small gain, but the customer service score seems to be on a rebound after plummeting 6 percent in 2014 from a score of 80.
- Citizens were more satisfied with the government's customer service than with the process of applying for and receiving federal services, the clarity and accessibility of information that agencies provide, and government websites.
- Citizens said information they received from agencies was clearer and more accessible today compared with a year ago

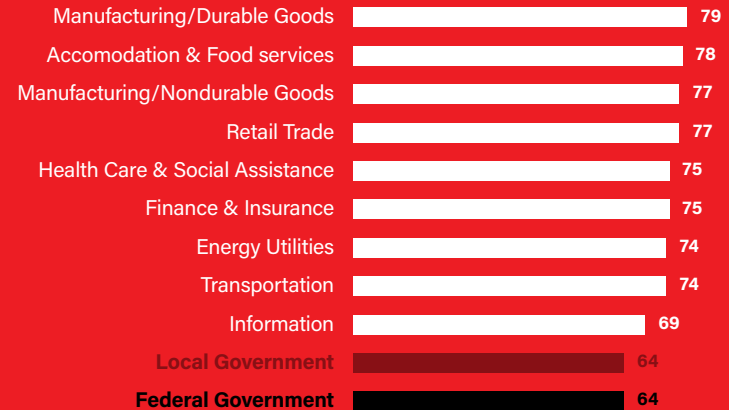
• Despite these bright spots, overall satisfaction with government has been declining since 2012. Scores fell from 68.4 in 2012 to 63.9 in 2015, but the pace of the decline has slowed dramatically.

- Not all government services were deemed unsatisfactory. In fact, some agencies deliver services that rank better than or equal to the best in the private sector. Retirees receiving services from the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp., for example, rated their experience a 91, which surpassed the top-scoring companies in the private sector, including Amazon and Nordstrom.

But the customer service experience isn't a one-way street. How customers interact with the service will greatly affect their experiences. "For example, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) typically receives scores that are on the low end, but consistent with prior years, electronic filing is much more satisfying for users. In 2015, individual e-filers give the IRS a score of 76, whereas those filing on paper rate the experience much lower at 56—a substantial gap of 20 points," the report noted.



## Private and Public sector customer satisfaction scores



## Federal Government 2014 vs. 2015 Citizen Experience Benchmarks



Source: [2015 American Customer Satisfaction Index Federal Government report](#)

# Cultivating a Customer Service Mindset

Good customer service will require a cultural shift for many agencies. No longer can agencies view their interactions with customers as single transactions. They must consider the long-term relationship that will evolve as customers' needs change. It's not about one customer experience, but also about a long-term customer relationship.

Governments that want to make the customer experience better must focus on the user, not solely the provider. Government officials need to put themselves in users' shoes because what seems obvious to a federal employee is not always apparent to the average citizen. To promote this new approach, more federal

and local governments are taking cues from the private sector and naming CCOs. The leadership of a CCO and other senior leaders is vital. Great customer service cannot happen unless employees at all levels of the organization support it, especially executive leaders.

## To create a culture for customer service:

### 1

Employees across the organization must understand the motivation for and strategy of good government customer service. Gaining support from relevant leaders early on will help spread the agency's customer strategy and target efforts.

### 2

Use data that proves customer service has helped other agencies or that it will help your organization run more efficiently. Present that data to officials in a way that's visual and easy to understand.

### 3

If you don't have the data to impress decision-makers, wow them with dramatic quotes and resolutions of major customer problems. All the numbers in the world aren't as powerful as listening to a call center recording of a crying mother or reading an email from an irate retiree.

### 4

Make the business case for customer service. Explain how good customer service can save your agency time, money and employee resources. Nurturing a culture of good customer service can also help enhance and accelerate the success of priority projects.

# The next frontier of government customer service: omni-channel

Do you remember when filling a prescription required a trip to your local drugstore and a lot of back and forth to ensure that your doctor and pharmacist were in sync? Your options for communicating with them were limited to phone calls and in-person visits.

But that was before our phones got smarter and email, mobile apps and social media transformed the way we interact with people. We now have options. We can start a conversation with our pharmacist over the phone, move to an automated voice system or text messages to complete a refill request, and manage our prescription via mobile app. The best part: Everything is seamless and convenient.

Today's customers expect this level of service not only from their local pharmacy, but also from their government. They want to receive service via the channel that best suits their needs, whether it's social media, a mobile device, the Web or in person, and they expect a consistent level of service across those channels. The issue, however, is that these channels often exist in silos, meaning information or interactions shared through one channel may not transfer to another.

It shouldn't matter if a customer's first interaction with your agency comes via email, tweet or a phone call. The mindset in government should be this: There is no wrong door for customers to connect with us and get answers to their questions. Ultimately, customers are searching for answers, and it's likely they may reach out through social media first to find them.

Agencies must consider how and when they will respond. If needed, how will they ensure that the conversation seamlessly transitions from a tweet to a phone call, email or text message exchange, for instance? Agencies must be able to tie all these multichannel interactions together to provide a good customer experience.

It shouldn't matter if a customer's first interaction with an agency comes via email, tweet or phone. The mindset should be: **There is no wrong door for customers to connect with us and get answers.**

# Industry Spotlight

## How to treat citizens like customers



An interview with Franco Amalfi, Director of Digital Engagement Strategy at Oracle Public Sector, North America

When we visit retail websites or travel search engines, we expect a certain level of service. We expect information to be accessible, clear, concise and easy for us to navigate on our own. There's always the 1-800 number if things go awry, but more often than not we're able to find what we need with ease. Unfortunately, the opposite has been true of government websites and online services.

Agencies have struggled to make the transition from offices and call centers to digital self-service options for tech-savvy customers and younger generations. For early-adopter agencies, there's still work ahead to simplify services and make them more user-friendly. After all, the process of providing customer service is continuous. But the good news is they're making progress.

The truth is change can be hard, but it's not impossible. We sat down with Franco Amalfi, Director of Digital Engagement Strategy at Oracle Public Sector, North America, to learn how governments at all levels can put a greater emphasis on better customer service, especially through digital channels.

**"There's a lot of emphasis in simplifying, putting knowledge into the website to allow people to use self-service and get the answer themselves through a website or whatever channel they're on,"** said Franco Amalfi, Director of Digital Engagement Strategy for Oracle Public Sector, North America.

Amalfi noted that it's not just the technology delivery that's changing.

**"I think that there's a major shift that is happening in government with the way they're looking at citizens,"** he said. **"There are more discussions around them as customers. And treating citizens as customers means viewing the individual or individuals they're dealing with more on a continuum."**

Traditionally, government focused on helping citizens complete a single transaction, such as applying for a license or a permit. But governments are now using the concept of an individual as a customer, whose interactions with government should be viewed holistically over a period of time.

In this new age of customer service, it's critical that agencies understand who their customers are, how they interact with customers and how customers interact with them, the customers' level of satisfaction, and how all that information can better inform the way they do business.

Beginning this journey starts with one step: Identify the customer. Do you know how citizens use your services and how they access them?

**"There's a lot of emphasis in simplifying, putting knowledge into the website to allow people to do self-service and get the answer themselves through a website or whatever channel they're on."**

**—Franco Amalfi**

One way to find out is by creating personas that represent major agency user groups, express the major needs of those user groups and provide a clear picture of their expectations and how they're likely to interact with your agency.

**"Then define an overarching strategy that ties it all together,"** Amalfi said.

One persona might represent females between the ages of 25 and 35, while another might represent males over the age of 40. These personas will change depending on the agency and its stakeholders. Segmentation into personas could be by age, ethnicity, income, health, or nearly any relevant attribute.

But let's say one of these users groups mainly interacts with an agency via mobile devices. Based on that information, the agency would need to provide mobile-responsive services for that user group.

To nurture better customer relationships, agencies must also consider how their various service delivery channels can work together and provide continuity of services across those channels. For instance, a customer should be able to initiate a conversation with an agency and continue that engagement over the phone or in person. In the private sector, this is more commonly known as omni-channel.

To adopt this continuity of service in government, Amalfi advised agencies **"to make sure that whatever tools they're using or processes they're designing actually enable continuity. A lot of private-sector companies have been doing this for many years, but now we're seeing this happening in government. Governments realize they're serving the same customers that interact with Amazon or Apple, and they want the same type of experience."**

The challenge with omni-channel is that a lot of citizen service systems that support citizen services are not connected. To overcome this barrier, agencies must map out a strategy for integrating disparate channels and commit to carrying out that plan.

But, really, all of these customer service efforts help agencies achieve a larger goal.

**"At the end of the day, agencies have a mission they have to deliver on,"** Amalfi said. **"There are a lot of constraints. There are never enough resources, and people are retiring more and more, so they need to find ways of automating some of these processes. But they need to also find ways of providing these services on the channels where people want them."**

# Learning From Others: Two Customer Service Case Studies

Now that we've covered the basics of customer service, let's look at examples for inspiration and to help you build a case for improved customer service at your agency.



How Atlanta Used Oracle Managed Cloud Services to Empower Employees and Citizens



Until recently, the city of Atlanta had a major customer service issue on its hands.

Consider this: In any given year Atlanta received more than 1 million non-emergency calls. But the city's 23 independent departments and offices had no central system to field and track the status of those inquiries. That decentralized organizational structure caused silos of legacy information systems and limited citizens' visibility into city operations.

That was before 2014, but a lot has changed since then.

That year, the city consolidated all of its call centers and service information channels and rolled out its first non-emergency customer service center, known as the ATL311 Customer Relationship Management System (CRMS). An internal soft launch of ATL311 went live in March 2014, and the cloud-based system was launched publicly in six months later.

**"Since its launch...ATL311 has enhanced and modernized the customer service experience for our residents and visitors, making the city of Atlanta more accountable, responsive and efficient,"**

Deputy Chief Operating Officer Kristin Wilson said in a [news release](#).

The ATL311 CRMS includes a self-service portal that provides citizens with information about city services, such as pothole repairs, zoning violations, stray animals, tree trimming and trash pickup. Residents can call or go online to submit and track service requests, keep up with information about city services, and provide feedback to improve [ATL311.com](#).

On the back end, the city's call center representatives can access a searchable knowledge base and taxonomy of city services, which enables them to quickly respond to citizen inquiries.

The city now has a cloud-based solution that:

- Meets service-level agreements that mandate that the city must answer 85 percent of incoming calls in 20 seconds or less.
- Protects confidential citizen information with top-notch system security.
- Enables customer service representatives to quickly answer daily inquiries or status requests on city services.

To ensure services remain robust, officials implemented citywide performance-reporting capabilities that include agency- and program-specific dashboards to measure responsiveness and quality. That data is integrated with geographic information system (GIS) tools so management and citizens can see inquiries in a map view. This level of transparency and accountability improves internal decision-making and ultimately the customer experience.



## Federal Initiative Gives Customers a Voice and Agencies Instant Feedback

Following a 2011 White House executive order to improve customer service, General Services Administration officials chose to start by directly engaging customers for their input via feedback surveys integrated into the service channels.

The idea was simple: GSA would get rid of the long, archaic and difficult-to-complete surveys and instead create portals where users could submit anonymous high-quality performance information. More than a customer service tool, the **Feedback USA** customer experience pilot seeks to improve customers' experience where they use government services the most.

Feedback USA launched in 2015 as a cross-agency pilot among GSA, the State Department and the Social Security Administration. The pilot will last for a year and include quarterly evaluations to improve its usefulness.

**"Customers applying at Department of State passport agencies/centers, SSA card centers, Department of Veterans Affairs' facilities, and GSA's Quantico base store will now get the chance to have their say,"** according to Feedback.gov. **"Customers will be able to provide quick feedback through a less-than-a-second tap of a button at a kiosk and additional feedback through the**

**agency's website. Agency partners will see this anonymous feedback in real time, so they can act quickly to resolve any issues and improve their services to the public."**

Customers expect quick, reliable and convenient service, so the feedback system relies on smiley face buttons that can alert agents to their performance in real time, rather than passively using web traffic data, satisfaction surveys after phone conversations and annual customer satisfaction surveys. Many agencies depend on those methods, but they're not always reliable and rarely happen in person.

**"This is the first time we've had a real-time effort to measure customer service,"** Victoria McFadden, Deputy Chief Customer Officer at GSA's Office of Customer Experience, told *The Washington Post*. **"We want to see if there's something agencies will react to if it's real-time data."**

Eventually, GSA plans to roll out similar feedback programs for taxpayers interacting with other agencies both online and through call centers. It's clear that Feedback USA fills an important gap. Without understanding customer satisfaction levels, front-facing agencies are left to blindly provide service that can fluctuate on the quality spectrum. **Feedback.usa.gov** provides a strong precedent for other agencies to follow.



# Customer Service Cheat Sheet

This takeaway section will give you best practices for customer service implementation plus talking points to help you make the case for improving customer service at your agency.

## Talking points

One of the first hurdles you may face: explaining the benefits of customer service to those who are skeptical about it, but without their support, you can't get started. Here are some ways to help you move the conversation along:

1

Good customer service makes it easier for customers to interact with us. The easier we make it for them to engage with us, the more they'll do it.

2

Making customer service easy means helping people to serve themselves. Every customer service experience that ends in failure costs money and could result in bad PR. Let's write our own story and tell it well!

3

The customers we serve can be our advocates in the future. If customers have good experiences, they are likely to share them with others.

4

Customer service is a means to mission success. The better we serve our internal and external customers, the more effective we will be at accomplishing our mission.

# Customer service best practices

1

Get a good idea of who your customers are, whether it's through user personas, journey maps, surveys or interviews. User personas help you create reliable, realistic representations of your key audience segments, and journey maps provide a visualization of the customer's emotional experience as they interact with you.\*

2

Ask customers what they want, using interviews, focus groups, social media or other channels. Identify key themes, and use those to set key performance indicators. From there, set customer service goals, but do not set them arbitrarily. Goals must be measurable and verifiable.

3

Put yourself in the shoes of someone who doesn't know what they are looking for and try to figure out how easy — or hard — it is to access key resources online or using other channels. Ask someone who is not as familiar with your agency's resources to help with this exercise.

4

Consider using an omni-channel approach that provides a seamless experience for customers across various channels. This is where journey maps can come in handy again.

5

Customer service requires a team effort. Let your team know they are valuable and encourage employees to treat one another as they would external customers.

6

Training and staff development on the back end are key. Content developers, call takers, digital teams and policy shops need to be on the same page. Ensure that everyone is up-to-date on the latest information, expectations and progress. Encourage them to provide feedback and make suggestions for improvement.

\*Download [GovLoop's Customer Service Playbook](#) for more in-depth details on creating user personas and journey maps.

# Five questions to ask if your agency is customer-phobic

1

**We already know the answers**

How do you know? Could it be that you are asking the same questions in the same way, almost guaranteeing that you'll hear the same answers? Are you analyzing the data objectively, or are you reading what you want to hear into the results?

2

**We just don't have the time**

We hear you! The demands on each of us after years of increasing workload and fewer available resources have made this a very familiar mantra. Rich input at the Fuzzy Front End can, however, save months or years in getting a new direction "right". Make the best use of the time that you do have. Then try to find some more.

3

**We don't have that kind of budget**

As it turns out, nobody has "that kind of budget." There are an infinite number of questions one can ask at this point in the process. There are also an infinite number of ways of interpreting the results when you are casting your net this widely.

4

**They don't know what they will want**

Our customers/consumers can't see the forest for the trees. Maybe, but the answers, early in the process, are quite often in the trees, in the branches, in the leaves, or hidden in the roots.

5

**We don't believe in the Voice of the Customer**

This syndrome is also sometimes known as "we don't dare learn that we're working on the wrong problem."

=

**If your organization has one or more of the above symptoms, run, do not talk to your nearest customer, and then:**

- Apologize for your past indifference.
- Promise to be more attentive.
- Ask a bunch of the right questions (even wrong questions are better than no questions).
- Get ready to deal with a brunch of opportunity laden surprises.

Source: National Association of State Chief Information Officers, "[Relationships Matter: Customer Service Strategies to Promote Enterprise Services](#)"



# Customer service resources

Here are some links to get you up to speed on customer service.

[Building Government for the 21st Century](#) [Oracle]

[Customer Service Playbook for Government](#) [GovLoop Academy Course]

[Building a Customer Service Dream Team](#) [Desk.com]

[Oracle Roadmap to Modern \(RTM\) Customer Service](#) [Oracle]

[The Customer Service Playbook for Government](#) [GovLoop]

[Roadmap to Modern: Beyond 311 to the Modern Citizen Experience](#) [Oracle]

[Journey Mapping the Customer Experience: A USA.gov Case Study](#)

[How to Create a Customer Experience Index](#) [DigitalGov]

[The Future of Citizen Engagement: 5 Trends Transforming Government](#) [GovLoop]

A special thanks to  
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## **About GovLoop**

GovLoop's mission is to inspire public sector professionals by serving as the knowledge network for government. GovLoop connects more than 250,000 members, fostering cross-government collaboration, solving common problems and advancing government careers. GovLoop is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with a team of dedicated professionals who share a commitment to the public sector.

For more information about this report, please reach out to [info@govloop.com](mailto:info@govloop.com).

The goal of this new pocket guide from GovLoop is to help you make customer service a priority in your agency by sharing best practices and success stories from across government. We covered the basics of customer service in government and what makes a great experience. We also shared survey data from the public that makes clear citizen customers expect agencies to function much like the nation's top private companies. Customer service in government is about more than a single transaction. It's about a continuous experience that may start on social media and transition to a mobile device. This new way of doing business requires a new way of thinking, and we know you're up for the challenge. Let this resource guide you on that journey.



1152 15th St. NW Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20005

M (202) 407-7421  
F (202) 407-7501  
[www.govloop.com](http://www.govloop.com)  
@GovLoop