RAISE THE BAR ON CUSTOMER SERVICE

A new generation of CRM technology can bring big improvements without big costs.

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FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES of all sizes, great customer service has never been more important, nor more feasible. Given large constituencies and limited resources, agencies have struggled to provide information and services in a timely manner. Unfairly or not, the government call center has become synonymous with long waits, unresolved problems and unhappy citizens.

However, customer, and in turn, citizen expectations are rapidly changing. Across the private sector, companies worldwide have shown they can serve large customer bases quickly and effectively across multiple channels. Those same customers are also citizens, who expect the same quality of service when they interact with agencies.

For example, if citizens are looking at an agency website on their smartphone, they want to be able to submit a question where they are—by email, social media, or phone. They want a seamless experience, with no service lags or hiccups as they jump from one channel to another.

It seems like a tall order. Private sector organizations have benefited from customer relationship management (CRM) solutions designed to manage today's multi-channel customer engagement. However, there is a misconception that CRM is too costly and difficult for agencies to implement, given the complexity of their operations and their legacy IT environments. That is no longer the case. With cloud-based solutions, like Federal Case Management, based on Salesforce Service Cloud, government agencies can serve their citizens just like their favorite retailer or restaurant would.

Federal Case Management is able to provide the same transformational customer service as Service Cloud, while adding data models and business processes tailored to the needs of government agencies. Leading agencies like Denver 311 for example, have tapped into the power of Salesforce Service Cloud to connect citizens with services. Since implementing Salesforce, the City of Denver is now able to provide hundreds of services to their 650,000 citizens, things like reporting a pothole in the road, missed trash pickup or even the best way to register your vehicle. Each of these services is now provided in a customized experience for each citizen—and a single record of engagement within the City and County of Denver.

The Software-as-a-Service model gives agencies a lot of flexibility in how they implement the software. They can deploy Federal Case Management for something as simple as correspondence or complaint management, or something as complex as grants management, program management, or disaster management. And they can be up and running in a matter of weeks. In short, it serves any scenario in which an agency needs to manage its customer engagement, whether with the general public, partner organizations, or their own workforce.

Keep in mind that customer relationship management might not involve any direct interaction between a customer and an agent. Increasingly, people are looking for self-service options, including apps (Salesforce offers more than 3,000 partner apps on the Salesforce AppExchange), online forms, knowledge-based FAQs and community discussions.

Finally, data analytics and dashboard capabilities provide an agency with visibility into how all of their customer engagement processes are working—and how they might be improved. A robust CRM solution will do more than improve the quality of individual citizen interactions. It will help your agency improve employee productivity, free up resources to support the overarching mission and build closer relationships with constituents.

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