

# Accelerating digital citizen engagement and self-service



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## She receives a government bill by mail.

Online, the website tabs are confusing, so she fills out a “contact us” form, followed by a “do not reply” email and, a week later, a phone number, which she calls. After a lengthy effort getting to what might be the right department, she’s put on hold for more time than she has. She hangs up. During a commute, she again checks the website, but the function keys don’t show properly on her phone.

The fee goes unpaid.

Sometimes the government’s reputation for poor customer service is deserved. Only 63% of respondents to a 2022 survey said they were satisfied with government online services.

To rebuild trust in governing agencies that has waned in the past 20 years, the public sector is on a mission to better serve its people. In 2021, President Joe Biden even issued an executive order to transform federal customer experience and service delivery.

Government has many of the required tools: Automation, big data and machine learning are changing dialogues among agencies and their constituents. Yet only a dynamic digital framework and a “mindset that extends past the customer service centers” can take advantage of them, says Karen Tuttle, associate director of Digital Experience for Public Sector at Verizon, which consults public agencies. All projects must account for constituent experience with the government, Tuttle says.

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## Good CX is good governance

Local governance has changed from static to dynamic. Constituents today seek personalized service, unprecedented transparency, 24/7 access and quick responses to community requirements. They also expect to be asked for feedback regularly and to receive unprompted government updates.

Excellence in modern governance emphasizes an excellent customer — or, in this case, constituent — experience. Excellent CX improves trust in government and understanding of constituents.

Digitally enhanced CX and supporting systems can improve agency efficiency and effectiveness by:

- Anticipating what constituents want by analyzing agency interaction data and quickly offering the desired service.
- Personalizing services or campaigns, such as via targeting constituents by demographic or stated interest.
- Providing dynamic systems of engagement via secure, omnichannel communication.
- Creating automated alerts, such as via text, for emergencies and regular updates for other government updates of interest.
- Allowing constituents to access services automatically on their own.



## Solutions Verizon offers agencies wishing to improve CX include:



Contact Center as a Service (CCaaS) solutions



Virtual Agents



Conversational IVR



Voice Callback Cloud



Social Intelligence



Contact Center Consulting Services



Contact Center Managed Services



Custom Reporting Professional Services

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## How to personalize services

However, engaging constituents requires the right tools and an appreciation for greater digital situational awareness.

To cater to those still wanting to talk to a person on the phone or in person, agencies require:

- Secure, reliable phone lines that can be operated from multiple locations.
- Access to data that solves problems, even if it's personal information.
- Automated systems to answer simple questions that save time.

Constituents who want to gain information on their own require:

- Omni-channel access to government agencies.
- The ability to look up their own accounts online.
- Channels on which to easily give feedback on services or projects.



Sharing of vital information with communities also benefits from personalization, via campaigns customized with government data-driven intelligence.

Knowing what people want may require reaching out to them, as well, and possibly frequently. Automated polls are one solution. Analyzing customer data such as call reasons, verbatim chat sessions and website searches also may provide useful insights.

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## Why self-service engages

By examining user data, governments have discovered, for example, that people enjoy the convenience of a single online portal that meets many common public-sector needs.

Self-service portals give constituents a one-stop-shop for common tasks such as paying fines, registering to vote, getting a driver's license or applying for a business license. Portals don't replace in-person assistance, but in trusting constituents with their own data, they empower them. Resources are available securely, around the clock, from their own devices and, hopefully, without lengthy phone calls or trips to government offices. Again, some automated features can help answer simple questions.

Self-service is part of predictive customer service, which is enabled by collective intelligence that results from team collaboration and data cross-referencing.

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## Data and collaboration are key

Collaboration is at the heart of the maturing government sector, be that with colleagues, systems or voters. To be meaningful, these nascent dialogues — virtual or otherwise — among constituents and government agencies may require agencies to rethink their digital requirements.

The same backend intelligence and cross-departmental collaboration needed on complex government projects is needed to better serve constituents. An augmented collective intelligence, supported by resource sharing via robust communication systems, must be created, despite organizational setups that traditionally allowed agencies to work almost independently.

Data from multiple departments may be easily cross-referenced to bring new insights regarding constituent pain points and potential solutions. Even small agencies can benefit from a digital strategy that considers CX.

"Equipping employees with the right collaboration tools, particularly in our hybrid working world, allows them to find answers ... quickly," Tuttle says.

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## Framing citizen engagement

Good CX can begin with small things. Tuttle suggests agencies have mobile-friendly websites, well-designed FAQ chatbots, scheduled callback automation and presence on social media.



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**Karen Tuttle, associate director of Digital Experience for Public Sector, Verizon**



But seamlessly combining disparate systems and ensuring bandwidth for multiple purposes requires a holistic enterprise digital strategy. Signs of a mature CX include:

- Issues resolved in a single interaction.
- Consistent experience across channels.
- Self-service for common tasks, with easy, optional escalation to a live person.
- 5-minute-or-less hold times on the phone.
- Process transparency.

“Once you start to reach CX maturity, agencies can recognize operational efficiencies that ultimately result in cost savings in terms of less man hours, as opposed to looking at infrastructure and software costs alone,” Tuttle says. An agency that consistently serves constituents well also forecasts constituent requirements better.

Municipalities should invite a CX expert to map the customer journey, adjust channels used by constituents, and optimize processes and customer interactions based on reporting and analytics, Tuttle says. Consider cloud-based systems that can scale communications quickly, tailor messages, disseminate emergency information quickly, and ensure websites and apps never go dark.

Technical requirements include a robust communication platform that supports collaboration; security systems that allow the safe sharing of data across divisions, agencies and locations; and a strategic internet provider for the digital backbone and project management.

“It really is about prioritizing investments and projects to put the right infrastructure, security elements, data storage and backend applications in place before being able to introduce the online experience we see with our favorite private sector brands,” Tuttle says.

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