



PUBLIC SECTOR

HOW TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY IN GOVERNMENT USING CUSTOMER FLOW MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGIES

A Q-MATIC WHITEPAPER

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Version 1.0

Abstract

From city halls and tax offices to embassies and consulates, finding ways to make best use of resources to offer the best possible customer experience and meet centrally set targets at lowest cost is top priority challenges of today.

This white paper describes these challenges from a customer experience and customer journey perspective and possible solutions.

Qmatic has been in the service to great customer experiences for more than 30 years. Our solutions, systems and knowhow have also been applied to the Public sector all over the world where the focus is to improve customer experiences and operational efficiency with the methodology Customer Flow Management (CFM) that was invented by us.

Solutions with Customer Experience Management (CEM) and the methodology Customer Flow Management (CFM) assist organizations around the globe to reduce costs while offering better service.

Introduction

“Innovation leaders in the EU are more concerned about finding radical new approaches to define and deliver public services.” 1)

Governments in countries all over the globe are put in front of great challenges on how to deliver services to their citizens in an effective and efficient way. An ageing population will drive the need for changes in the way services will be provided in the future, forcing public institutions to be more innovative than today.

Meeting budgetary cutbacks is a real challenge today, if that's met through more efficient service delivery process or more effective service design, it applies to all areas of the public sector. Adding the political ambition and public demand for better, quicker, and cheaper service, you have hard knot to untie.

What's needed is design and management of the complete customer journey, and not just the individual touch points, to meet those challenges.

If the complete customer journey is in place, measurement of progress and results to drive continuous performance improvements will be dramatically easier to facilitate.

This also fits very well with the new governance models of the public sector that puts the citizen at the center.

1) Innovation in Europe Thematic Report 2012 under Specific Contract for the Integration of INNO Policy TrendChart with ERAWATCH - 3 December 2012

Public Challenges

Even though the customers of public services (citizens) not often have more choices of how, when and where they receive service today, they still are demanding customers. They want the best possible service for their tax money.

So not surprisingly, governments are focusing on the improvement of the quality of service delivery and cost reductions at the same time.

From our involvement in the public sector over the years, we've identified four main challenges that you will no doubt relate to. So let's take a closer look at the challenges facing public institutions today, as we see them.

- (1) Improving efficiency
- (2) Improving the customer experience
- (3) Increase staff satisfaction
- (4) Driving business improvements through data and analytics

So, how can Customer Experience Management (CEM) and Customer Flow Management (CFM) methodologies turn these challenges into opportunities – so that everybody benefits, staff and customers alike?



Fig 1. Understanding and managing the customer journey is key in delivering improved customer experience in the public sector.

Meeting the challenges

CHALLENGE 1: IMPROVING EFFICIENCY

Being able to handle more customers with limited resources and tighter budgets, without compromising the quality of service is no small task. By applying CFM methodology, you can increase processing capacity, while actually reducing costs and improving service levels.

In effect, making best use of time – for you and your customers. The result? A more positive customer experience and a staff inspired by a calm and orderly workplace.



Shrink the “gap” between customers

Having to wait for a customer to approach the counter only to tell him that he has been waiting in the wrong line is no fun for anybody. Fortunately, there are many ways the CFM methodology helps eliminate confusion and reduce the wasted time between transactions. For example, solutions can direct customers to the right service point at the right time and by that streamlines the customer flow.

With the right solution you can also organise linear queues for short transaction services. You can also track customers throughout the customer process. Knowing where every individual is in the customer management process simplifies co-ordination. All of this, while clear signage helps to reduce reaction time and walking time.

Speed up the right service

The more you know about a customer before serving them, the more likely you can provide the right service – more quickly. Improving the efficiency of the transaction step in the process allows staff members to take care of more customers – or spend more time with those customers who have special or more complicated needs.

To reduce transaction time without sacrificing the quality of service, a solution can inform staff about the customer’s objective before the customer reaches the counter. This enables staff to prepare while waiting for the approaching customer. By making it possible to identify the customer’s service needs early on, you can better match the need with the right competence, which also saves time. In addition, a solution provides staff with information about the workload ahead so that they can plan and prepare accordingly.

Using a self-service check-in solution empowers the customer and provides the means for better matchmaking.

Spend more time with customers

Every customer is different. Sometimes a customer is looking for a quick answer to a simple question. Other times, the right service means being able to spend more time with a customer. So why handle them in the same way?

A solution gives you flexibility and efficiency, so that the amount of time spent with a customer is proportionate to the need. For example, you can identify the customer's service need upon arrival so that simple service requests can be taken care of without the customer having to go to the main service desk. This allows you to increase the number of simple enquiries or service transactions handled at meet and greet stations. For more complex customer requirements or needs, you have the opportunity of channel migration to support your most effective service models.

A solution also eliminates the time and effort needed to manually collect and compile various wait time and customer flow reports by providing automatically updated reports. This helps free up staff from peripheral tasks so that they can provide the best possible service – for every customer.

Make best use of staff and space

The lunch crunch – you know it well. Imagine being able to spread out the service workload evenly throughout the day instead. With a solution, you can optimise your workforce requirement by steering customers to less busy hours with a calendar booking system, for example, that helps eliminate the problem of over staffing or understaffing. You can also look forward to real time monitoring and resource planning of staff. Managers are notified when service level targets are not achieved so that they can take the right actions. In addition, it is possible to integrate the system with Work Force Management (WFM) systems.

With a solution it possible to use limited floor space in a more efficient way. Instead of having several local waiting areas – which adds up to a lot of space, you can combine them into one larger, centralised waiting area. The solution is then used to guide customers, informing them when it is their turn and where to go.

CHALLENGE 2: IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Chances are your customers are not coming by for the fun of it. They have an important reason for visiting. Perhaps it is an urgent, stressful matter. In any case, they are people who deserve the most positive customer experience possible. This is where our CFM methodology comes in.



Boost service quality

At the heart of the customer experience is the quality of service provided. So why not welcome customers with a meet and greet solution? Our solution can also increase service quality by better matching customers and staff, based on the customer's need and staff competence. We call it skill-based routing. In addition, employees are in a stronger position to meet the need since they have access to the customer's service history and can prepare accordingly.

Yet when it comes to service quality there is always room for improvement. It's a continuous effort. With our customer survey model, you can poll customers to get their first-hand opinion on the service level experienced – helping to identify improvement opportunities.

Reduce actual waiting time

Waiting to be served is usually a waste of time. It can be frustrating and stressful. Customers can feel neglected. Waiting time also says a lot about the efficiency, and perhaps even commitment, of the organisation. The goal is to keep waiting time to an appropriate length. After all, it goes hand in hand with an enhanced customer experience.

In addition to streamlining the customer flow and making it more efficient, our solution can reduce the actual waiting time for customers by steering them to less busy hours with a calendar booking system, for example, which is an efficient way to make appointments. Our solution also provides real time monitoring and resource planning of staff. Managers are alerted when service level targets are not achieved so that they can do something about it.

Reduce perceived waiting time

The longest wait is the one you cannot control. For customers, it is often the *perceived* waiting time that matters most. Our solution can reduce the perceived waiting time by using media solutions in the waiting area to present information and entertainment, for example. This also contributes to a more efficient process and reduces actual waiting time since the information presented can help customers to better prepare before service. We call this active waiting – and it makes time fly.

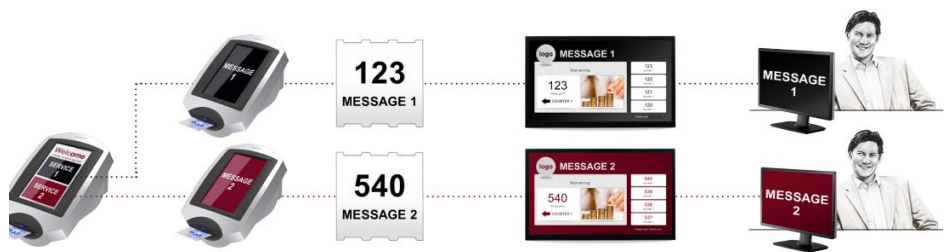


Fig 2. Qmatic Customer Journey gives control of all the surfaces in the branch and not just the big screens on the wall as typical Digital Signage suppliers.

A city hall reduced average service time from 50 to 17 minutes

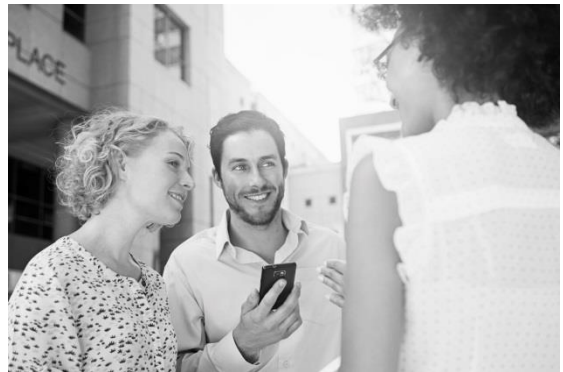
Promote a sense of calm, order and respect

All of us want to be treated like people, not cattle. Fortunately, a calm and orderly waiting area is also a more efficient and productive one. A solution removes the mystery and worry from the wait by guiding and updating customers about where to go, where to wait and waiting times. Simply put, with CFM customers know that they are in-process and not forgotten.

By implementing virtual queuing, which removes the need for a physical waiting line, the waiting experience can be made more pleasant. The customer's place in the virtual queue is secured with an identifier, such as a number printed on a customer service receipt or sent to their phone as a text message. More frequently mobile apps on smartphones are being implemented. This solution also helps fulfil the customer's privacy requirements. When applied correctly, virtual queuing is both fair and welcoming.

CHALLENGE 3: INCREASE STAFF SATISFACTION

Attracting and keeping qualified employees is essential for any organisation. And it is not always easy. What is more, an employee that appreciates his or her tasks and the workplace itself is more likely to take care of customers in an efficient and positive way.



The CFM methodology can increase staff satisfaction by streamlining the customer flow and making it more efficient. This in turn creates a more orderly and relaxed environment for staff and customers alike. Satisfied customers are usually friendlier towards employees, contributing to a positive workday.

A solution also contributes to a sense of professionalism since it gives employees knowledge about the customers waiting, and better matches employee competence with the customer's need. Staff can take pride in knowing that they are informed and ready to meet the customer's requirements and provide the best possible service. In addition, staff is supported by real time monitoring and resource planning that alerts managers when service level targets are not being achieved so that they can take actions accordingly.

CHALLENGE 4: DRIVING BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH DATA AND ANALYTICS

When it comes to the operational efficiency and the customer experience – there is always room for improvement. The challenge is where and how. A solution can supply management with historical and real-time statistical data that can help drive improvement. The data is automatically captured by the system at every step in the process. This gives you a highly efficient and effective way to gather data, compared to manual data collection.

Enhancing performance

Using tools to determine and analyse customer throughput per hour, waiting time per customer and cost per transaction, for example, management can focus on areas with high improvement potential. This way you are able to initiate the right operational improvement activities, based on the data and knowledge offered by the system, to improve efficiency, shorten waiting time,

reduce costs or make best use of limited space, for example. By collecting data on service delivery outcome, for instance, a solution supports performance management of staff. With real time data, managers can take immediate actions to use staff more efficiently and reduce waiting times. What is more, a solution opens up innovative benchmarking opportunities, based on historical data and much more, to help you and your operation get better all the time.



Results /conclusion

The wrong CFM solution can be worse than having no solution at all. Over the last 30 years we have worked with many world-leading organisations in the public and private sectors – from governments to FTSE100 and Fortune 500 companies. Below are just a few examples, based on real life cases, of what clients have achieved with our solutions.

- A city council improves service resolution rates from 74% to 94% over a 9 month period
- A city hall reduces average service time from 50 to 17 minutes
- A city council improves productivity by 16%, representing an annual savings of more than £160k
- A city council decreases average transaction time from 14 to 10 minutes due to a 5% increase in “casual callers”
- An embassy reduces average waiting time from six to one hour

If you want to know more about what your business can achieve with our solutions, just let us know. We’ll be happy to prepare an ROI model based on your business reality and customer needs.

About Qmatic

”There is only one boss - the customer. And he can fire everyone from the chairman down, simply by spending his money somewhere else”.
Sam Walton, 1977

Qmatic’s vision is to realize the full potential of every meeting. We help our clients engage and interact with their customers from the very first touch point. We gather information around the customer journey and help create brand value from improved customer experiences. By creating a seamless customer journey from online channels through to face-to-face meetings, we increase customer experiences and strengthen our clients’ brands.

Qmatic holds a market leading positions in the public sector, financial services, retail, and healthcare applications and it is estimated that more than a quarter of the world’s population pass through a Qmatic system every year.

Qmatic has a truly global footprint and operates in over 120 countries through own subsidiaries and partner network. The Qmatic Group has a turnover of EUR 60 million and employs some 300 people. The company’s main owners are Altor Fund II GP Limited and ICG.

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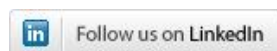
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