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Transforming Customer Support for Government IT Functions

The customer support organization is typically the face of an IT organization, and customers often form their impression of a commercial entity or government agency from the experience they have when receiving support. Consistently meeting or exceeding customer needs and expectations -- which are themselves always evolving -- can help citizens access vital services and benefits and help government earn and keep public trust.
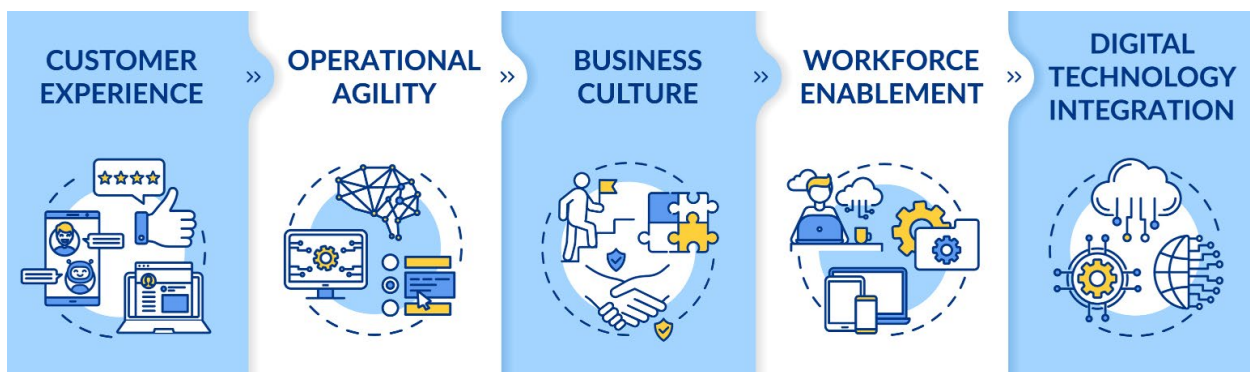
Whether they serve the general public, or internal, intra- and inter-agency customer bases, customer support organizations are sources of business value. Unlock that potential, and they can become much more than places where queries are resolved or redirected. Customer support can be a listening post, helping organizations learn about customers, identify pain points, and realign processes. They can also serve as the starting point for larger redesign and transformation efforts that move the whole organization from a technology-focused, "inside-out" to a customer-centric, "outside-in" model.

As one recent client engagement illustrates, transforming a customer support organization into a highly effective and empowered group of professionals requires the right expertise, tools, and approach. Careful evaluation of capabilities and constraints will help direct the strategic use of human-centered design and tactical interventions at critical junctures where people, processes, and technology meet. Customers will not be the only beneficiaries of these efforts. Keeping the customer experience at the forefront of decision-making also brings measurable performance improvements and can create opportunities for organizational growth.

A Success Story

Deloitte took over day-to-day operations from an incumbent contractor for a customer support organization at a government client. The organization delivers Service Desk (Tier 1) and End User Support (Tier II) services to thousands of customers across multiple geographically dispersed locations.

The challenges this organization faced are typical of underperforming customer support organizations. Deloitte observed an organization that operated with a legacy inside-out focus on technology rather than an outside-in focus on the customer. Customers regularly had negative experiences due to unresponsiveness when requesting IT

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support, and many customers had developed the habit of escalating routine inquiries and concerns directly to client leadership. There were no provisions for Tier 0 support, which include a variety of automated and self-service options that allow customers to help themselves. The customer support organization was inundated with high ticket volumes and an unmanageable backlog of unworked tickets.

An initial evaluation -- an IT Service Management (ITSM) maturity assessment -- revealed low process maturity, indicating that a significant, long-term overhaul of the customer support organization would be required in order to meet both client and customer expectations. A closer look revealed both cultural and technological challenges. Processes needed review and redesign. Some areas of the organization required immediate triage. Deloitte used a variety of tactical surge efforts to correct the most underperforming areas while concurrently developing and executing against a strategic transformation plan.

Multiple, short-term surges allowed the organization to realize some immediate improvements while pursuing the broader plan for transformation. Over time, the organization saw a dramatic decrease in backlog, making day-to-day operations more sustainable, increasing customer satisfaction and brightening the outlook for the client. The average time to close tickets was ultimately reduced by almost half, while new automation and self-service capabilities allowed for even greater efficiencies. A redesigned operating model added key capabilities, with Business Relationship Management foremost among them. A new performance management system helped leaders monitor individual and team efforts and helped everyone understand the common goals toward which the organization works. As performance standards were raised, a renewed organization began to coalesce around shared customer service values and a stronger sense of purpose.

Key Outcomes

Deloitte took a series of steps to evaluate, plan, and successfully transform the organization's culture, processes, and technology. Efforts ranged from tactical to transformational, and took full advantage of Deloitte frameworks, tools, and products. The result: reduced client frustration, maximal operational performance, and enhanced customer experience.

- A series of process improvements, newly developed performance expectations, and multiple surge efforts resulted in an 85% decrease in the ticket backlog and a sustainable healthy backlog.

- Leveraged a customer-first approach as well as ITIIL and Help Desk Institute (HDI) leading practices to implement controls and automations, reducing the average time to close tickets by 42%

- Increased the average weekly ticket turnover ratio from an average of 50% to over 100%.

- Exceeded all Service Desk SLA thresholds for Average Speed to Answer (ASA) and First Call Resolution (FCR) with calls answered in an average of 40 seconds or less and greater than 86% of eligible incidents resolved on the first call.

- Decreased the average number of monthly customer inquiries to the Service Desk by providing new Tier 0 support capabilities through the development and launch of a Self-Service portal replete with FAQs, training videos, and a health dashboard showing the availability and status of key services

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- Reduced the average time to install software by almost 700% from 20 days to under 3 days through the implementation of new process and software deployment technologies

- Improved time to resolve tickets by 35% through the relocation of the Service Desk from multiple client sites to Deloitte's USDCs

- Created a BRM team that developed strong relationships with customer groups and re-established trust with the business

Lessons Learned

Customer-support transformation is a journey, yielding new insights about the organization's deficiencies and strengths as well as its potential to achieve higher performance. Understanding current process, technology, and organizational capabilities and constraints is vital to leading a customer-support transformation.

People	Process	Technology
• Changing and sustaining culture takes time, intentional targeted efforts, and reinforcement • Incrementally increase the bar for performance measures and never become complacent • Re-define job descriptions to clarify expectations and measures of success • Establish relationships with the business early. This will hasten the incorporation of the voice of the customer into your strategy.	• Build an understanding of contact drivers early on and set expectations for resolution • Continually develop and refine processes & procedures to proactively address business needs.	• Even with outdated technology you can drive performance change by optimizing current solutions and relying on manual processes • Be relentless in pursuing key stakeholders to update needed technology updates by providing sound business cases and outlining the cost of the status quo.

The Transformation Journey

Deloitte's extensive work with customer support organizations and broad capabilities in organizational design and transformation helped this government client realize measurable performance improvements and cultivate a customer-first culture.

These improvements transformed an underperforming team into one that continually meets or exceeds client and customer expectations. Standards are incrementally and continually heightened as customer focus becomes more deeply ingrained in the culture.

The customer-first model also brings new clarity. With the customer in center focus, the organization gains a greater sense of shared purpose. People better understand their roles and contributions while leadership can better plan for the journey ahead.

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Contact Us:

Steve Harms
Senior Manager

Deloitte Consulting LLP
stharms@deloitte.com
+1.571.585.2298

Britt Nelson
Senior Consultant

Deloitte Consulting LLP
brnelson@deloitte.com
+1.415.589.0770