



How to improve the perception of value

Government services around the world face the following challenge: how to do more with less within an environment where public expectations of service are rising.

AS PRIVATE SECTOR organizations embrace the power and need for improving the customer experience, government service organizations are realizing the need to improve citizen services and to develop mechanisms that demonstrate the value they deliver to their various stakeholders.

The expectations of consumers are growing as organizations like Apple or Netflix continue to raise the bar on customer experiences – simplifying and personalizing the way they buy everything from smart phones to iPads to DVDs. These and other service innovations elevate expectations and broaden the gap between what citizens expect from government services and what they actually receive. Many citizens feel they are not getting enough value for their tax dollars.

Attempts to boost customer trust and loyalty by improving the citizen experience are being driven in part by growing demands for convenient and effective services. While government organizations often serve the same citizen, they rarely share information among themselves. Each organization focuses on its own services. Citizens therefore have to deal with individual departments with different service delivery processes. This leads to frustration and the perception of wasteful and costly inefficiencies.

Many public sector organizations have invested significant amounts of time and money to improve customer satisfaction. However, improving customer satisfaction is not enough. Canadian citizens and government leaders need to measure and improve the perception of “value.”

Value is simply quality – however the customer defines it – offered at the right price. In other words, value is the rela-



tionship between price and quality. For decades, some of the world's best-in-class organizations have recognized value as a vital measure to track. The reason: value as perceived by the customer is the single most important long-run determinant of market share and profitability. Any organization that monitors the value it provides to customers can predict an increase or decrease in business and financial performance. The perception of value is as significant for government organizations competing for government funding and mind share of citizens who openly express positive or negative opinions about the delivery of its programs and services.

Understanding how citizens define and measure perceptions of quality, across the entire customer experience – at every interaction, whether that interaction takes place at a retail counter, on the website, through a call centre agent, or working face-to-face with a government officer – is an essential first step. Next, analytical techniques can be used to identify key value drivers that increase the perception of quality and value.

By ensuring an organization measures what customers' value most for all aspects of the customer experience, from end-to-end, enables it to cascade information throughout the organization identifying

areas of strength or opportunities for improvement.

Measuring the end-to-end customer experience and what customers' value most is a fundamental component of building a service culture. This information should be available and understood by everyone. Everyone in the organization, regardless of level, must be accountable for the client experience. From the deputy head down to frontline staff, everyone should have a customer experience quality metric, specific to their role, on their performance scorecard. The entire organization must be focused on what clients want and how their role contributes to delivering a high-quality experience.

Recognizing and rewarding improvements in customer experience is an important component of building a service culture. Publishing success stories and communicating examples of the ideal customer experience keeps employees focused on its importance.

Indoctrinating a culture of high quality customer experience starts as soon as employees are hired or transferred to your department. An orientation program describing how clients are to be treated and a step-by-step description of the “ideal customer experience” helps to establish the importance of a service culture as the backbone of your organization.

For a service culture to grow and thrive in a public sector environment, government executives must have a burning desire to develop a totally client-focused organization. Organizations that deliver a memorable customer experience have a leadership team who are obsessed with every detail of the experience and are committed to doing whatever it takes to consistently deliver the best possible experience. 