Making Constituent Interactions Effortless

How state and local governments can simplify the constituent experience.
Improving the government experience for constituents is a top priority for jurisdictions across the country.\(^1\) When residents and businesses can interact more securely and effortlessly with government, outcomes improve and customer satisfaction scores rise. Higher satisfaction is linked to greater trust in government, which in turn is associated with increased voter participation, economic growth and development, and agency cost savings.\(^2\)

**Strategies for Improving Constituent Experience**
The following strategies can help your agency enhance customer experience, scale support and minimize costs.

**Provide an omnichannel experience**
Omnichannel experiences allow constituents to use their preferred communication channels, reduce call wait times and expedite issue resolution. Constituents don’t want to repeat information as they move from one agent or channel to another. To ensure a seamless customer journey and help agents work more efficiently, look for solutions with a ticketing system that sends the constituent’s information and other context across channels.

**Offer self-service**
Constituents can get answers to common questions and solve basic issues on their own via self-service. Self-service can be as simple as providing a dedicated web page that offers help articles. Other options include chatbots that answer frequently asked questions and links that guide constituents through processes. Constituents can receive information about what they need to do, the documents they’ll need to provide and the next best steps on their journey.

An accurate, up-to-date knowledge base is critical to self-service.

“The knowledge base is typically the first thing that constituents interact with when they try to reach out to government. It provides a one-stop shop for content and serves as a single source of truth that constituents can rely on,” says Owais Chaudhry, Solution Consultant for Zendesk.

Look for a knowledge base solution that is easy for agents, administrators or other nontechnical personnel to update. Consider implementing workflows to make sure content is reviewed and meets agency standards before publication.

**Incorporate AI**
Residents and businesses should be able to find what they’re looking for without understanding which agency or department does what. Look for solutions that incorporate artificial intelligence, machine learning and automation to pull up relevant content based on the context of the interaction or a few words supplied by the constituent or service agent. These solutions also make contact center teams more efficient by analyzing support tickets and automatically routing callers.

The key to rapid and successful deployment is adopting a purpose-built customer experience solution, where AI has been trained already on thousands of customer service interactions.

**Personalize experiences**
A personalized approach helps constituents feel seen and valued and improves satisfaction. It also helps agents serve constituents more efficiently. Personalization includes providing an omnichannel platform so users of any age, physical ability or language can access services according to their needs and preferences. Personalization also includes sharing help content or recommending next steps based on the user’s search history, past interactions or forms they may have filled out in the past.

**Create feedback loops**
Feedback loops enable constituents and agents to communicate what is and isn’t working for them. Look for tools that allow users to easily
vote on and comment on articles, forms and other content. Create internal feedback loops so agents can share customer feedback they’ve collected as well as their own impressions of what interferes with delivering better service.

“It’s important to have a mechanism for recording and analyzing feedback and correcting issues quickly,” says Chaudhry. “Being able to see a corrected or more complete solution is going to provide the constituent with a better experience the next time they come around and will help build trust.”

Apply data analytics
Data analytics provide insight into complex patterns, future trends and the impact of potential courses of action. By analyzing and modeling data from workflows, feedback loops, customer satisfaction scores and other sources, you can identify areas for improvement and opportunities for new services. You can also use analytics to help justify the business case for investments.

Looking Ahead
To execute the strategies above, many agencies adopt a cloud-based solution that includes tools for building customer service portals, a knowledge base, chat features and more. The ideal solution should be easy to implement, learn and use. It should integrate with analytics, collaboration and communication tools, as well as legacy systems. Be sure to look for a solution that is FedRAMP-certified and supports security and compliance best practices.

As you consider technology to improve government experience, consider these questions:

- Who is our user base? How do they prefer to interact with us?
- What are our constituent experience goals?
- Which channels should we prioritize for implementation?
- Where can we automate to improve processes? When would constituents need or prefer to talk with an agent?
- How can our solution provider help us navigate technology deployment and organizational change management?
- How should we measure success?

How Seattle Boosted Customer Satisfaction

The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspection (SDCI) adopted a modern omnichannel customer support solution from Zendesk to connect constituents, businesses and other customers with SDCI coaches and experts. Using live chat, the first-touch response time is less than 5 to 6 minutes, and the average time to resolve an issue is less than an hour. The average customer satisfaction score is 95 percent.

"[W]e’re now able to serve all of our customers online, whether it’s a member of the public who has a question about a construction project next door or a first-time applicant who is having a hard time understanding our complex code structure,” says SDCI Director Nathan Torgelson."
At Zendesk we’re on a mission to simplify the complexity of government and make it easy for agencies and constituents to create connections. We do this by showing organizations how to unlock the power of the interactions they have with their customers every day. That power gives agencies what they need to create constituent experiences that are more connected, personalized, and rich.