

Road map for customer-centric transformation

LGCRM: providing more effective and comprehensive interactions with customers.

By RICHARD HUNTER

LGCRM is a business strategy with outcomes that are all about improving customer satisfaction. These are achieved by organising local authorities around customer segments, and fostering customer-satisfying behaviours through capturing and leveraging relevant information and implementing customer-centric processes. The cornerstone is better integration throughout the customer channels and back-office functions.

Many councils describe themselves as customer-centric, but few will involve the customer or a customer advocate in the senior leadership team. Most councils have a senior management team made up of personnel from a combination of key disciplines including finance, regulatory, and human resources, or departments such as those that represent geographical segments. What is too often missing is a formalisation of governance to establish customer relationships.

LGCRM initiatives can provide improved effectiveness in customer interactions simply by using technology capabilities. However, to provide more-effective interactions, councils must:

- Coordinate all technologies that touch the customer;
- deliver a consistent message;
- ensure consistent interface; and
- maintain consistent service levels across channels

Transformation levels

LGCRM transformation is about councils choosing to become more customer-centric. The journey begins with the council becoming "customer aware" i.e. it progresses from being inward-process-centric whereby the majority of business functions are based on internal thinking.

The second level in the transformation is to become "customer sensitive". Councils now become better skilled at interacting with customers within a context of past relationships and projected future relationships.

The third and final level (the desired state) is "Customer-collaboration". This is when all services are redefined with customers' desires in mind. Distribution methods and processes are re-worked to best serve the community. The goal is to have customers as well as service providers "on the same team."

Cultural change is the underpinning of LGCRM. For a customer-centric transformation to occur, strategic layers, metrics, behaviours, processes and technologies must be mutually supportive.

Undertaking the transformation journey

- Recognise customers as being your priority and never losing sight of the key strategic objective of the council. Think looking in.
- Develop and continually maintain insights on customers; survey, use and analyse customer data.
- Organise around the customer and don't be frightened of transformation (if necessary use technology as the change agent)
- Develop and provide incentives for a collaborative culture internally and extend it to customers.
- Implement processes based on customer benefits; start with customers, then work back removing organisational barriers to customer satisfaction.
- Integrate channels with the rest of the council and with service providers.
- Behave co-operatively with customers and deliver value during each interaction.
- Prioritise technology investments based on delivering better customer insight, access and interactions.
- Continually explore avenues of leveraging the primary asset: information. This begins with fully understanding the processes and defining initiatives that support the key delivery objective, which is how to organise information to best serve and benefit the community.

The relationship between a council and its customer is primarily based around the transfer of information; the LGCRM strategy must handshake very closely to Enterprise Information strategies.

How enterprise information is organised within a council has a profound impact on the success of the LGCRM strategy.

Tauranga District Council's vision was to bring a LGCRM project and an Enterprise Information project together as one. This collective project, in partnership with Origen and Dataworks, involves four key components: Records Management, Document Management, Customer Contact and Workflow.

The Customer Contact module, initially designed between Origen and Western Bay of Plenty District Council, also offers compelling areas of benefit. With the close integration with documents, records, and workflow the module provides an excellent platform for Council transformation to be even more customer centric. ■

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