turning
round the telescope
citizen-centricity: digital devolution

Atos

Turning round the telescope

The pressures on public services mean it's no longer enough just to do things better; government must think differently to make the transformation that's so urgently needed. This paper explores why putting citizens, not technology, at the heart of new operating models is now essential.

Why now?

We're on the verge of some of the most radical change in the delivery of public services for decades. A potent mix of financial necessity, societal change and a technological revolution is helping to redefine the role of government.

Traditionally, government has seen technology primarily as way of cutting costs: to automate processes and reduce the need for human and physical resources. It's an outdated view – especially among younger demographics. Millennials, and even more so Generation Z, don't see technology as a cost-saver – it's part of life. And citizens across the generations now expect government to catch up with other sectors and offer better-designed, more useful online services.

The UK is on the cusp of change that's possibly bigger than the arrival of the internet. The reasons lie in the combination of:

▶ the explosion in the penetration and connectivity of disruptive technologies, like mobile, social networking and cloud-based services

▶ severe austerity, with the salami-slicing of public services no longer enough to achieve the level of savings that local and central government need

▶ the current political drivers of government devolution and the smarter state.

Meanwhile, Millennials are starting to become leaders and decision-makers, and they're frustrated by the pace of change. Rather than making cost or technology the tenet of service re-design, there's a more radical agenda: to totally re-invent government operating models by putting citizens at the heart.

And the win win? Citizen-centric services can actually cost less, both short term through more innovative thinking in service transformation, and in the longer term through shared data and better co-ordination of resources.

A paradigm shift

In the political domain, digital creates for government the opportunity to redefine the purpose of the state. New models for public service delivery will serve the citizen by informing, connecting and enabling a mixed economy of channels and providers. Its purpose: to empower citizens to improve quality of life and help them to plan and transact day to day.

In the age of the Smart City, the smart citizen will expect fast, easy and simple access to the information and facilities they need – when and how they need them. With 365-day, 24/7 availability of service, citizens will be able to interact with government any time, any place.

This vision is a far cry from the digital government services that have been delivered until now. The focus has been on transferring processes online to make the front end more accessible and efficient.

The new citizen-centric vision is about delivering personalised services. That is, instead of government transmitting to the many, it will interact with individuals based on an understanding of their needs and trigger responses and mixed resources to meet those needs in an integrated way.

Proactive and predictive government

It's a vision that's starting to become a reality. City of Edinburgh Council has redesigned its operating models and is changing the way citizens interact with government. The Council now offers fully automated everyday services to residents and partners online. As well as increasing efficiency, these new digital transactions are creating robust data assets and intelligence to help improve key services in consultation with citizens – and invent ones that citizens haven't yet thought of.

A customer or Council employee can instigate a transaction using any device, which is sent straight to the resource who will action it. Citizens can, in a single place, view the data the Council holds about them. Staff can access a single view of the citizen to better understand their needs.

City of Edinburgh Council transactions are now faster and more cost-effective – for example the processing of a missed bin collection is down from nine days (with multiple calls and possible complaints) to between one and two days. Critically, the Council has an integrated digital platform for becoming increasingly more proactive and predictive. It now uses the digital insights it's gathering to target assistance more effectively and develop new ways to predict need and provide help and information accordingly. One aim is deliver a 'Digital Welcome' for new residents: a move to the city that will trigger digital signposting for services for which new residents are eligible, information and advice they might need, and ongoing news and support according to their individual circumstances.

Danny Gallacher is Head of Customers Services at City of Edinburgh Council. "We learned how critical it is to engage fully with citizens to involve them in the design and build trust and confidence – not just at the start but throughout an agile development process", he says. "Internally, the transformation had to go fully end to end, across departments and right through from front-office to the back end. And above all, think proactive, predictive and collaborative."

Blended experiences

It's a pointer to a future in which citizens will shift seamlessly between real-time channels (government, search, social media, advertising, email, apps and customer relationship management systems) on any device they choose. Government will spot gaps and offer services using rich data to predict and meet day-to-day and life-event needs.

But today the digital divide, of course, still exists. Many of those most in need of public services may not own a smartphone or have access to wi-fi. Yet this is changing. In Haringey in the last local election, for example, 90% of electoral registration was online. In a recent survey in Tower Hamlets of customer interactions, over 90% of access to the internet was either through tablet/smart phone devices. So digital inclusion is less of a barrier now than it has been.

However the citizen-centric future is not about a faceless and remote government. If new digital operating models help to optimise and coordinate resources more efficiently, then the future is a blended experience. The majority of citizens will want to transact online (with a diversity of digital experiences depending on the type of interactions they need to have), but with the option to use the phone or meet with multi-agency local services when needed most.

"Above all, think proactive, predictive and collaborative."
Danny Gallacher, City of Edinburgh Council

Joining the dots

The lesson is to ensure that services go where the citizen goes, such as the new Tell Us Once service for registering a death that has set up some interfaces within hospitals. Tell Us Once enables people to inform central and local government departments just once of a birth or death, removing the previous need to supply and verify the same information to multiple government departments and agencies. It shares information (with the citizen's consent where appropriate) with 32 different government services across HM Revenue & Customs, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Identity and Passport Service, local authorities, the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency and Veterans UK. Data is shared either directly or through delivery partners or existing trusted channels.

Tell Us Once has reduced the burden on citizens and has a 98.7% customer satisfaction rating across a mixed demographic of users. More widely, experience is underlining that fear of data sharing is turning into expectation – and that people will give up their data as long as there is immediate, personal and tangible benefit to them (for example the new online self-assessment tax service).

Crucially, Tell Us Once (TUO) shows that citizen-centricity means starting by looking at what needs to be achieved for the end user, and making smart use of existing channels and data to achieve it.

Steve Scott at the Department for Work and Pensions headed up DWP (TUO). "We didn't need to invest in any major technology projects, we just needed to join up the dots better", he says. "We learned that if you do it for the right reasons, at the right time for the citizens and with the right consent, then you will deliver value. Go where the customer is – and find the right partners to work for."

Technologies in place

Partnership is key, and as government devolutions rolls out, local and central government need to work more closely together to connect data. For citizens living day to day, the boundaries between local and central departments, different local authorities, cities and agencies are irrelevant. The vision for citizen-centricity is real-time data flowing between agencies, with multi-sided markets connecting people, predicting need and targeting resources, and joined-up government serving communities and strengthening society.

The technology needed to deliver this vision, for the most part, now exists, such as totally secure cloud-based services that replace transactions with seamless messaging across organisations that keeps real-time data flowing and makes real-time analytics available through any device a reality.

So what next?

Perhaps the most significant barriers to a truly citizen-centric state are fragmentation and silo-thinking. This inhibits data-sharing, increases the costs of transformation, and prevents the kinds of collaboration that are essential within existing cost constraints. These barriers are cultural as well as technological and geographical. Collaboration and asset-sharing needs to happen not just across government but across the public/private sector divide as well, to piggy-back private sector resources to achieve public service objectives, for example through open data initiatives.

Such seismic changes are certainly complex and demanding. For citizen-centric services to work, internal employee engagement is vital: cultural and behavioural change and upskilling remain critical challenges for digital government – now, perhaps, more than ever. And there are other huge challenges – around data quality and complexity, organisational boundaries, multi-partner working, commercial agreements and budgetary demand.

Yet the vision of true citizen-centricity may not be so far away. Everything is possible – as long as a clear case is well made and there is shared commitment to the change.

"We learned that if you do it for the right reasons, at the right time for citizens and with the right consent, you will deliver value"

Steve Scott, Department for Work and Pensions

Conclusion

- ▶ Public sector reform demands a reinvention of business models to do things differently – not just better

- ▶ Silos must be broken down to make smarter use of existing data

- ▶ Citizens will give up personal data as long as there is immediate, direct and tangible benefit to them

- ▶ Digital solutions must focus on the outcome for the citizen before challenging legal or cyber-security concerns

- ▶ Digital transformation need not require massive cost investment – just better joining up of existing systems and innovative thinking

- ▶ Technology combined with local knowledge will cleanse and match data that multiple agencies can share to safeguard citizens more effectively while cutting costs significantly

- ▶ Getting more collaborative, proactive and predictive is now critical for digital government

- ▶ The boundaries between central and local government, local authority boundaries are dissolving. Local government must be clearer about what it needs from central government.

Atos: touching UK citizens every day

Our impact on UK citizens' lives is important, extensive and growing. We're behind the scenes assisting citizens daily and working with some of the UK's biggest companies and the best in the world. We're helping to make life easier for UK citizens every day: on the train delivering ticketing and timetabling for National Rail; in the air helping British Airways make customer experience better; on the road supporting over 30 million MOT tests a year; in health managing over 50% of all referrals for hospital and clinic appointments via our Choose and Book Service; at leisure helping the BBC, Cineworld the Premier League to function day to day; and since 2001 as Worldwide IT Partner for the Olympic Games. This list goes on and extends into almost every part of life. We're also closely involved in all aspects of UK public services, with 7,500 staff and 65% of our UK business working closely with and delivering infrastructure and systems integration services for major government departments including HM Revenue and Customers, Department of Health, NHSScotland, Ministry of Justice and the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency.

About Atos: a trusted partner

Atos is a digital transformation partner trusted to work in long-term partnership with agencies across local and central government.

We understand the huge challenges of achieving true digital transformation while delivering public services. While doing more with less remains a dominant theme across the public sector, Atos will help you think differently to achieve the radical and lasting change that's needed.

Our long-term relationship with National Savings and Investments (NS&I) is just one example of our ability to work in collaboration to achieve major service improvements and cost savings. Atos provides all operational services for NS&I, processing over 50 million customer interactions per year and handing £123 million of invested funds. This has produced around £530 million cost savings for NS&I and employee productivity has improved by around 400%.

We're already delivering digital enablers that connect and safeguard multiple agencies and citizens instantly and securely, supporting the journey to the cloud, Big Data and analytics.

As one of the biggest Business Process Outsourcing providers in the UK, we have the size, scale and track record to give you the assurance you need. At the same time, we understand the importance of working with niche providers as part of a wider partner ecosystem. That's why we developed our SME Harbour programme to work closely with smaller trusted vendors to deliver truly innovative technologies safely into major public sector enterprises.

We are independent, adaptable and agile. We also bring experience, best practice and proven solutions from other sectors that will help you do things differently. And we take a consulting-led approach, which puts you at the centre of all we do.

About Atos

Atos SE (Societas Europaea) is a leader in digital services with 2014 pro forma annual revenue of circa €11 billion and 93,000 employees in 72 countries. Serving a global client base, the Group provides Consulting & Systems Integration services, Managed Services & BPO, Cloud operations, Big Data & Cyber-security solutions, as well as transactional services through Worldline, the European leader in the payments and transactional services industry. With its deep technology expertise and industry knowledge, the Group works with clients across different business sectors: Defence, Financial Services, Health, Manufacturing, Media, Utilities, Public sector, Retail, Telecommunications, and Transportation.

Atos is focused on business technology that powers progress and helps organizations to create their firm of the future. The Group is the Worldwide Information Technology Partner for the Olympic & Paralympic Games and is listed on the Euronext Paris market. Atos operates under the brands Atos, Atos Consulting, Atos Worldgrid, Bull, Canopy, and Worldline.

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