



Software & Data

Single Customer View

How local governments can improve service delivery and optimise resources with a single customer view.



How local governments can improve service delivery and optimise resources with a single customer view.

An emerging opportunity for Australia's local councils.

While federal and state government activities garner much attention, it's the local council that has the biggest opportunity to directly impact people's lives. Local government organisations direct building regulations and economic development, local roads and transport, parks and playing fields, libraries, local environmental issues, water and waste management, and other community-based services. This creates a significant opportunity for councils to have a positive impact on the liveability of their cities or shires.

For example, when members of the community need to engage with the council, they can often find themselves spending lengthy periods of time until they find someone who can help. During this engagement, they often speak with multiple departments and provide repetitive information. This is common and a key cause of declining customer satisfaction.

As technology has become all-pervasive in corporate and consumer life, councils are faced with a mandate to digitally transform. Members of the community expect councils to interact with them in much the same way businesses would, with an individualised approach based on curated insights gathered about the person. Running councils like businesses, therefore, is an essential next step in the evolution of local government.

Becoming a leading example of progressive local government can significantly improve a council's re-election chances and dramatically increase the quality of life for members of their community. Australian councils are already vying to be at the top of the pile by using innovative technology to make their cities smarter.

One of the ways they can do this is to better leverage customer data to ensure they're providing the right services to the right people at the right time, all while managing their resources for maximum results.

Councils that struggle to provide a strong customer experience delivered over digital channels and seamlessly replicated across all local government services risk failing to serve the needs of their communities and, potentially, wasting time, money, and resources. Losing the next election is only one of the consequences councils may face if they fail to get it right. Councils need to plan for the future now and getting it wrong in the short term can lead to a massive challenge in the long term; one that is both expensive and complicated to address.

By contrast, councils that can demonstrate a strong connection with their communities, based on a comprehensive understanding of who they are, what they need and what drives them, will develop a reputation for excellence. Given the absolutely essential role councils play in their customers' lives, making sure their customers clearly understand the value of the council's contribution to the community is crucial.

Digital transformation and, specifically, leveraging data to deliver optimal customer-centric outcomes, offers one of the greatest opportunities for local councils since the first Australian local council was formed in 1838. It offers a way to improve service delivery and create stronger bonds with their communities, while using local government resources in the most effective ways possible.

Running a council like a business

Residents want to know that councils are investing their rates and taxes on the right things and delivering relevant services in return.¹ This means councils must take a private-sector approach and treat the members of their community like valued customers.

Councils face the same risks as businesses—for example, members of the community can simply move if they're not happy—and the reputational fallout that can be caused by failing to address issues can be very damaging. The community will show its disapproval at the ballot box.

Members of the community have already been conditioned by private enterprises to expect an experience in which they're treated like individuals, their information is easily accessible, and they don't have to jump through hoops to get the help or services they need.

Delivering truly individualised and innovative experiences for customers depends entirely on local councils having a comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date view of their customer data. This is achievable on the one hand, since people engage more online, so it should be easy for councils to gather the data they need. But, on the other hand, gathering these insights and information from vast amounts of data is resource-intensive and the data itself can quickly become messy, unwieldy, and difficult to analyse.

Data is not a static asset, although it can contribute to the council's bottom line. It's an amorphous concept, constantly changing and hard to pin down, and it can become out of date very quickly if it's not managed properly.

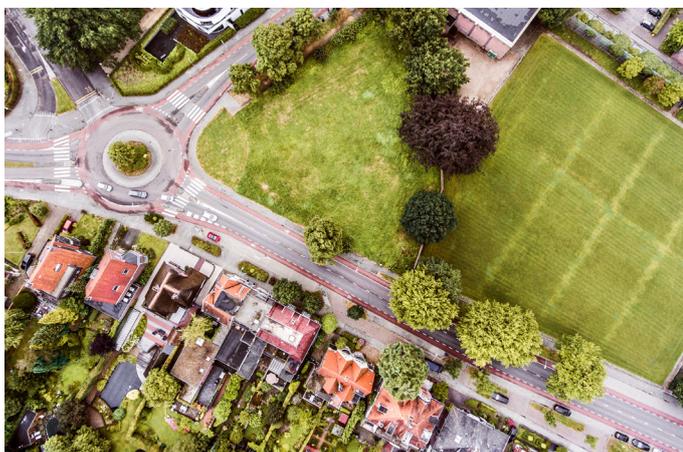
When councils fail to manage customer data effectively, they can suffer six key issues:

01. It becomes **harder to identify** which members of the community need what **services** and when, leading to a **degradation in service delivery**.
02. People can be required to constantly **provide the same information** to different council service providers, leading to frustration and a sense that the council doesn't understand or care about them as individuals.
03. The **time and money** invested on initiatives and programs can be **wasted** because they don't get to the right people in the right ways. For example, **erroneous data can mean a council sends critical information to the wrong addresses**, so they bear the cost of returned mail as well as the lost opportunity to engage with that person about an important matter.
04. The council may **struggle to maintain an effective digital presence** with backend systems that aren't integrated, interfering with their ability to deliver a personalised experience.
05. **Mistakes can creep in**, leading to customers feeling disaffected, revenue taking a hit, and services being underused.
06. Effective **digital transformation** may be hampered by a **lack of useful data**.

Making sense of data

Councils must understand members of the community from a multichannel perspective to deliver a consistent omnichannel experience, communicating seamlessly no matter who and where they are, and being able to provide the right information at the right time to facilitate a frictionless interaction.

Making sense of the data to enable this type of approach is a key challenge. Data tends to be inconsistent, captured in different formats, and stored in silos, making it difficult to gain a comprehensive, accurate, overarching view of the individual.



Traditional data collection methods create six key issues for councils:

01. The **data structure is rigid and difficult to change**, making it hard to analyse it from different perspectives to get truly useful insights. When critical information isn't connected, councils can miss important opportunities and make decisions without having all the right information.
02. **Change is constant and difficult to track**, including changing addresses, marital status, changing names, and moving away altogether. Using traditional collection methods, this change isn't always captured so the quality of the data is low, resulting in insights that can't necessarily be trusted.
03. There is no room for **new, emerging, and continuously changing data feeds**. For example, social media means people are interacting with councils across different channels and locations. **Without the right tools** to track this, it's impossible to keep an accurate view of their interactions.
04. **Access to data is complicated** and time-consuming, which makes it hard for councils to be responsive.
05. The **time to value for data is too long**, creating return on investment issues for councils that must manage their resources carefully.
06. There are **security and privacy concerns** around methods of gathering and storing data, leading to concerns regarding the confidentiality of personal information. With an increased focus on data privacy, councils must be acutely aware of what data they store and where, and be able to access this data at a moment's notice.

The value of a single customer view.

Doing nothing in the face of changing expectations is simply not an option. Councils that fail to find ways to leverage data effectively will be unable to keep up with the demands from their communities. This issue needs to be addressed sooner rather than later, before the problem becomes too unwieldy and complex to solve.

The most critical customer insights are hiding in the data that councils already possess. The true value of data becomes apparent when councils can unlock this data and gain a full 360-degree view of the people in their communities to understand them as individuals. In business, this is known as a single customer view (SCV).

An SCV solution will help local councils get one picture of each person no matter where their data resides in various council silos. The council can query this data instantly, regardless of the size or complexity of the data set or the query. Making better use of data will help councils allocate resources more effectively, provide efficiencies, and stimulate investment and economic activity.

SCV overcomes traditional data issues by:

- cleansing, standardising, and validating data on a single platform.
- linking information to deliver new relationship insights.
- making connections across any data source, including inside and outside the organisation.
- enhancing traditional data with vital contextual information, including location, demographics, social and more.
- informing predictive analytics for more powerful insights.
- making it easy to manage exceptions and standardise data governance across lines of business.
- visualising relationships with maps and graph databases.
- integrating insights into existing workflows and processes.

The benefits of best-of-breed data and an SCV solution include vastly improved experiences for customers. For example, they will have access to the services they need through the channel of their choice. Moreover, as they consume these services, people can have a guided conversation with a council representative who has a complete view of their circumstances and can help them come up with a payment plan for their rates, or help them discover additional services they may not have known were available.

Through cleansed, validated, and connected information, councils will be able to optimise infringement collections, better service council-managed facilities, and understand where to direct resources to where they'll be most appreciated by their communities. They'll be able to improve department efficiency, and act to reduce waste and fraud.

These value-added interactions will contribute to a more streamlined approach to delivering great services for the people of the local government area. This will dramatically reduce wasted time and money, and lead to more vibrant and engaged communities.

To get this type of information in the past, councils would have required tools operated by external consultants with extensive technical expertise. It would take significant amounts of time, money and effort to generate insights that could quickly become dated. Using an SCV solution, any business user can produce sophisticated models and gain rich insights in hours rather than weeks. And, with the right tools, councils can find patterns that were previously hidden, visualise insights in real time, then act with greater agility and confidence.

The single customer view in action.

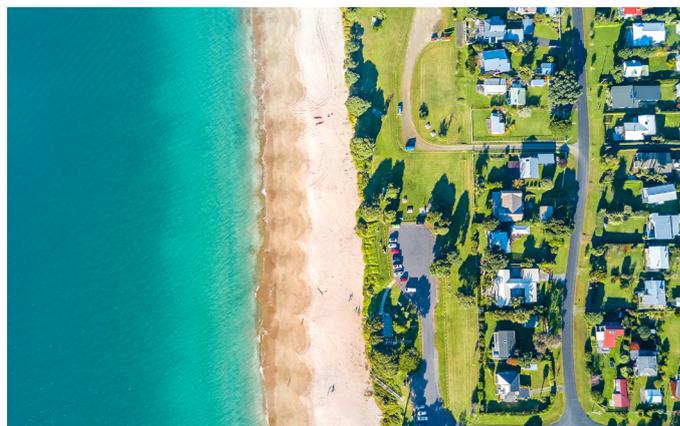
By consolidating customer data from more than 10 applications into a single customer view, Brimbank City Council in Victoria was able to streamline interaction between community members and the council for everything from scheduling waste collection to reporting lost pets. This meant the council was able to resolve community problems in less time, with fewer resources. It also made it easier and faster for the council to respond to government compliance mandates.

Brimbank City Council implemented a website that lets customers schedule or request services and make online payments. In the future, the council plans to let customers access information and request services using a single login, while data cleansing will provide address validation and other business efficiencies. The overall impact for members of the community is that it's easier than ever to interact with the council, while the council has been able to dramatically enhance its reputation by resolving customer issues quickly and efficiently.

Pitney Bowes offers data expertise and a SCV solution that can help local councils dramatically improve the services they offer, the way they manage their resources, and the way they deliver to the people they serve.

Footnote

1. <https://home.kpmg/au/en/home/insights/2017/09/victorian-local-government-ripe-for-disruption.html>



By consolidating customer data from more than 10 applications into a single customer view, Brimbank City Council in Victoria was able to streamline interaction between community members and the council for everything from scheduling waste collection to reporting lost pets.

This meant the council was able to resolve community problems in less time, with fewer resources.

Australia

Level 1, 68 Waterloo Road
Macquarie Park NSW 2113
02 9475 3500
pitneybowes.com/au

New Zealand

Building B, Unit 2 & 3
72 Apollo Drive
Rosedale
Auckland 0632
0800 748 639
pitneybowes.com/nz

For more information, call or visit us online.