pitney bowes

When the customers are citizens.

How a new focus on building relationships is helping government agencies improve citizen engagement and satisfaction.

Introduction

Although this paper is all about helping government agencies improve the ways in which they interact with citizens, it's important to begin by recognising one simple fact: every citizen is also a consumer. And as consumers, they have increasingly high standards for responsive and convenient commercial interactions.

Not surprisingly, those commercial experiences have raised their expectations when it comes to dealing with government agencies. As a result, government offices around the world are beginning to take advantage of today's most sophisticated business techniques and enabling technologies to help improve their productivity and the services they provide. In fact, many of those techniques and technologies are the very same ones businesses are using to better understand and respond to the needs of their customers.

Government agencies are improving results with technology.

For example, while retailers regularly manage and analyse mountains of customer data to help gain insights into everything from brand preferences to geographical differences, government agencies can use similar techniques to learn more about what citizens want and how and where they want it.

Consider also that today's bank customers have come to expect that when they log in to check an account balance, they'll also be able to make a loan payment and edit their contact information without being forced to log into another site or provide personal details that the bank already has on file. Likewise, they now expect that when it's time to renew a driver's license, the department of motor vehicles clerk will be able to tell them when their car registration is due for renewal. And government agencies can now make that happen.

At the same time, government agencies are now able to consolidate enormous quantities of data and use sophisticated analytics to learn more about everything from housing and transportation issues to possible causes of high disease rates in specific areas. The result? Public programs that are becoming far more effective in meeting citizens' needs.

Given increasing citizen expectations, government agencies need to achieve significant improvements in both effectiveness and efficiency by:

- **Managing constituent information**—by cleansing large data sets for accuracy, uncovering contextual relevance and identifying patterns

- **Creating and centrally controlling all constituent communication**—delivering the appropriate messages to the right people via their preferred channels

- **Mapping geographical data**—uncovering insights at specific locations for better decision making

As the examples in this paper illustrate, these business processes can be enabled by software solutions and services that allow government agencies at all levels to streamline and enhance the way they "do business" with citizens. The resulting improvements in both agency productivity and constituent satisfaction attest to their growing success.

- **An Australian government department in charge of broadband and digital communications built a reliable and efficient system capable of managing information flows relevant to customers and service providers participating in a special program.**

- **A town in southeast Queensland, Australia, is taking advantage of Location Intelligence solutions to enhance budgeting and decision making for everything from transportation and recreation planning to waste management and environmental services.**

- **A U.S. federal agency that had just introduced a new online registration service for its licensing programs developed an easy-to-use process for name and address validation that helped avoid duplication — on a tight budget.**

- **A large and fast-growing U.S. city's water district has vastly improved the accuracy of customer addresses, automated manual statements and improved its billing and customer service offerings, while maximising efficiency.**

Managing constituent information

Government organisations are the keepers of information on anywhere from a few thousand to hundreds of millions of citizens. And that information can come from a wide variety of sources, including income and property tax forms, voter and motor vehicle registrations, public assistance and arrest records, driver's and professional licenses, court proceedings and general correspondence. In fact, one individual can be represented in tens — or even hundreds — of government databases, from the local Council issuing swimming pool permits to the national income tax bureau.

So how can any one agency determine whether the Judy Smith in its database of registered vehicle owners is the same person as the Judith A. Smith, who holds a driver's license in the same state, or the J.A. Smith who owns a house at 24 Clark Street? And if, in fact, all three of those names belong to the same person, how can one agency (and perhaps others, as well) keep her information accurate and consistent, while streamlining their communications with her?

How can one agency determine whether the Judy Smith in its database of vehicle owners is the same person as the Judith A. Smith, who holds a driver's license in the same state, or the J.A. Smith who owns a house at 24 Clark Street?

Improving data integration

To establish and maintain that kind of accuracy and consistency, government agencies need to focus on integrating their data. Technology can help. For example, a U.S. federal agency that had just introduced a new online registration service for its licensing programs needed an easy-to-use process for name and address validation to help avoid duplication. Operating under tight budget constraints, the agency was concerned about the number of individuals who may have registered for a license more than once or in more than one state. And without an efficient way to handle address cleansing and de-duplication, it faced potential cost overruns and confusion as a result of managing multiple registrations for the same person.

Taking advantage of Pitney Bowes software solutions for geocoding and advanced address matching, the agency was able to streamline its licensing operations and stay within its budget.

Enhancing data quality

But what if you're looking at a different kind of data problem? What if you have plenty of data, but aren't able to tell where the truth lies? Social services agencies, in particular, collect vast quantities of information from citizens — often as the result of having asked similar questions on multiple forms. And because each of those forms may have been designed to help determine eligibility for specific programs, the information on one form filled out by Harry Williams may not be exactly the same as that on another form he filled out.

That's where importance of data quality and the concept of building a platform — one that serves citizens across agencies and jurisdictions — comes into play. Today, information resides in disparate databases, across multiple platforms, agencies and social services programs. In order to integrate this data, you've got to be able to match individual data items, or records. And to match records, you first need to cleanse and validate the information you have.

In fact, a data quality initiative may be the only way to ensure that the data used and shared by multiple agencies and programs will be accurate and actionable. Pitney Bowes data quality software starts by standardising and normalising the data you already have, so that fields are formatted and defined in a consistent way. It provides the tools you need to correct and verify names and addresses, comparing constituent information to official postal records. You can quickly highlight where corrective action is required and auto-correct data in real time to help keep questionable information from entering your system.

An effective data quality strategy is one of the most cost-effective ways to advance toward the goal of integrated eligibility. And when you share reliable information across multiple agencies and programs, you can take steps to lower risk, improve the performance of your initiatives and maintain control of your communications.

Making a revenue case for master data management
There's one challenge that virtually every government agency in every part of the world is facing today: a shrinking budget. Add that to a growing list of "must have" programs and it's easy to see why effective revenue collection is becoming more important than ever.

While revenue is the lifeblood of virtually all governments, many local government agencies still rely on paper-based communications to inform constituents about outstanding payments. That often contributes to a tangle of missed revenue opportunities, inefficiencies and, occasionally, even fraud.

Most agencies, however, are working with old technology that's nearly hard-wired into every collection process. So critical information about who owes what to which agency remains locked in a multitude of silos. Tax bills, fee notifications and renewal forms typically go out automatically to the names and addresses listed in databases dedicated to individual programs or departments. Without the ability to cross-check for changes and keep the data current, it can be very difficult to see where potential problems lie and understand what needs to be fixed. So how can organisations incrementally change operations to make them run more smoothly? The journey starts with better data management.

One of the most common reasons debts can go unpaid by constituents is that the mailing goes to the wrong address. An agency could be diligent about sending alerts, notices and forms on the right date, but if the debtor no longer lives at that residence, collection can be nearly impossible. Similar problems can occur when two different constituents have the same name.

Identity resolution means consolidating all the different constituent profiles to verify name, address and status. Master data management makes it possible to match and de-duplicate records to validate addresses and names, as well as set special conditions to different profiles — such as whether a payment reminder should be sent via mail or electronically. When data is stored on a common platform, each agency gains a clearer picture of its own citizen base and can use that insight to optimise the results generated by its collection efforts.

Improving constituent communication
Imagine that you're a senior citizen who's been living in the same town (and the same house) for the past 20 years. You visit the local senior centre a few times a month. They even send you regular emails about upcoming events. In other words, you're fairly sure that your town knows at least a little bit about you — beyond your name and address. Then you start getting emails announcing the upcoming opening of the town's new skate park. And a flyer even shows up in your mailbox inviting you to bring your skateboard and helmet to the park for your first ride. The town is wasting money on communications that they should know won't interest you. And in the process, they've annoyed you, leaving you feeling frustrated and unsatisfied with local government services.

Managing relationships with citizens
In response, many government agencies have decided to improve their relationships with citizens. They're taking a page from their business counterparts and changing the way they communicate with constituents. Businesses have been using customer relationship management (CRM) programs to create targeted, customised communications with their audiences for nearly two decades. And now the public sector is also turning to CRM — as in citizen relationship management — to improve the overall effectiveness of their communications and boost efficiency in creating and distributing those communications.

Government agencies need to manage their communications with citizens and speak in a single voice across multiple channels. Messaging and content should be tailored to reflect an understanding of everything from geographic location and home ownership status to age and household size. And analytics offer important insights into how citizens are likely to react and respond to specific initiatives, which can help shape communications strategies and lead to better outcomes for everyone involved.

Government analysts are coupling location data with their existing data and expertise, adding another dimension to the information available for making key policy decisions.

Keeping the dialogue flowing

Here's a case in point. A large and fast-growing U.S. city's water district, established in 1954, is now providing water to more than one million people. The nonprofit agency that runs the water district was challenged to communicate with a highly transient customer base, including 330,000 individual accounts across multiple household and business segments. With frequent address changes, the agency needed a solution that would ensure the accuracy of customer addresses. And they wanted to automate their manual statements, as well. In general, the agency needed to improve its billing and customer service offerings, while maximising efficiency.

The agency implemented a Pitney Bowes document composition solution that automates the creation of letters, bills, and statements. By integrating that solution with their existing customer billing system, they were able to generate statements automatically. They also implemented a solution to help ensure the accuracy of customer addresses.

A Pitney Bowes mail sorting solution helped the organisation realise additional savings by providing four levels of presorting and automatically generating the extensive audit trail and mail production reports required to speed mail preparation and postal acceptance. And one more solution is helping the agency archive customers' statements and enabling customer service staff to access an online version of a customer's exact bill. That means when agency staffers receive a customer call, they can quickly access and view the same bill as the customer, providing a more personalised interaction and allowing for much quicker resolution of discrepancies or questions.

As a result, the agency has been able to dramatically increase efficiency, productivity and cost savings. What's more, they've seen a decrease in the number of returned statements, thanks to improved accuracy of customer addresses. They've also automated and integrated their customer billing system, improved the overall customer experience with better formatted, easy-to-follow billing statements and are now providing quicker resolution to billing disputes.

Mapping geographical data

Of course both businesses and government agencies have been putting data and maps together for a long time. But with recent advances in Location Intelligence, mapping has taken on an important new role for most government organisations. Government analysts are coupling location data with their existing data and expertise to gain deeper historical and predictive insights, adding another dimension to the information available for implementing programs and making key policy decisions.

Enabling broadband access for citizens in remote areas

Location Intelligence solutions from Pitney Bowes have given governments throughout the world an opportunity to solve problems and develop policies in many areas. For example, an Australian government department needed a reliable and efficient system for managing the flow of information between customers and service providers participating in one of its programs. That program — designed to support equitable access to high-quality, sustainable broadband services across the country — provides registered Internet service providers with incentive payments to supply higher bandwidth services at prices comparable to those broadly available in metropolitan areas.

In addition to its telephone-based call centre, the department needed to launch an online, self-service system to provide 24-hour access for those wanting to learn about providers in their area and to determine their eligibility for subsidised broadband access. Pitney Bowes developed a custom solution using standard technology that allows visitors to the program's website to enter their address details online, confirm their location on a map and either identify service providers in their area or — if none are available — apply for subsidised access.

The solution has provided the department with a powerful platform for managing and automating its allocation of incentive payments for delivering "metro-comparable" broadband services to users in the Australian bush. It also ensures the kind of quality and integrity that's essential for a government department responsible for distributing millions of dollars in payments each year.

By spatially examining historic crime data—whether it's related to gun violence, gang activity, break-ins or sex offences—decision makers can visualise the trends and patterns.

Predicting and reducing crime

Far beyond the Australian bush, Location Intelligence solutions from Pitney Bowes are helping police departments in cities around the world—including New York, Toronto, London and several Australian states—gain more valuable insights from their crime data. With solutions that support both tactical and strategic analysis, Pitney Bowes is allowing law enforcement teams to identify crime hotspots, understand relationships between specific problems and particular types of crime, and anticipate potential problems based on what's recently happened and what's about to happen in a specific neighbourhood.

The cyclical nature of crime makes it possible to use hard evidence to support planning decisions. For example, temporal analysis reveals the peaks and troughs in crime over weeks, months and years. By spatially examining this historic data—whether it's related to gun violence, gang activity, break-ins or sex offences —decision makers can visualise the trends and patterns. And that can help them plan, plot and optimise the deployment of individuals and resources, increasing police productivity and public safety.

Sharing information and encouraging citizen involvement

Beyond law enforcement, government agencies are also relying on geospatial analysis to help coordinate emergency response planning, deploy e-government solutions and enhance site selection for large scale public works projects. For example, a town in southeast Queensland, Australia, is using Pitney Bowes Location Intelligence solutions to enhance budgeting and decision making for everything from transportation and recreation planning to waste management and environmental services. The town's 52,000 residents can access maps and other spatial information on the local government website, improving communications and increasing the efficiency of government departments.

Getting started

Government agencies are well aware of the need to do more with less—while keeping up with the latest technologies and streamlining processes. It's a tall order under the best of circumstances. But with shrinking budgets and constituents who are becoming more empowered and sophisticated in their expectations, it can be difficult to set priorities.

Here are some questions to consider:
- How can you make information easier to access and understand?
- What can you do to reach out to citizens in ways that let them know you understand their needs and concerns?
- Are you able to communicate with citizens in real time, either to answer questions or share emergency information?
- To what extent can you become more efficient by sharing information and communications across departments or agencies?
- What options have you considered for generating citizen feedback and reporting back on your findings?
- What new technologies might help your staff become more productive and offer a short time to value?

Conclusion

It may seem to be happening slowly, but if you listen carefully, you're likely to find that people are beginning to talk about how government agencies are providing more help than hindrance.

Now that businesses have paved the way—and set expectations accordingly—governments have an opportunity to rethink how they manage information, engage citizens and use the data they already have to help make more successful policies and smarter decisions on the public's behalf.

The examples in this paper represent just a small fraction of the real success stories we can share.

To learn more about how Pitney Bowes can help your agency or department become one of them please visit **pitneybowes.com/au**

Authors

Elizabeth Roche
Strategic Consulting,
Digital Commerce Solutions
elizabeth.roche@pb.com

Deb Purcell
Strategic Consulting,
Digital Commerce Solutions
debbi.purcell@pb.com

Joe Pindell
Strategic Consulting,
Digital Commerce Solutions
joe.pindell@pb.com

pitney bowes

Australia/Asia Pacific

Level 1, 68 Waterloo Road
Macquarie Park NSW 2113
+61 2 9475 3500
pb.apac@pb.com

Europe/United Kingdom

The Smith Centre
The Fairmile
Henley-on-Thames
Oxfordshire RG9 6AB
0800 840 0001
pbsoftware.emea@pb.com

United States

3001 Summer Street
Stamford, CT 06926-0700
800 327 8627
pbsoftware.sales@pb.com

Canada

5500 Explorer Drive
Mississauga, ON L4W5C7
800 268 3282
pbsoftware.canada.sales@pb.com

For more information, call +61 2 9475 3500
or visit us online: pitneybowes.com/au

15DCS05203_ANZ