MEASURE TO IMPROVE
IMPROVING PUBLIC SECTOR PERFORMANCE BY USING CITIZEN – USER SATISFACTION INFORMATION

Nick Thijs

european public administration network

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Preface

EUPAN and IPSG

EUPAN – The European Public Administration Network – is an informal network of Directors General responsible for Public Administrations in EU member States and European Commission (www.eupan.eu).

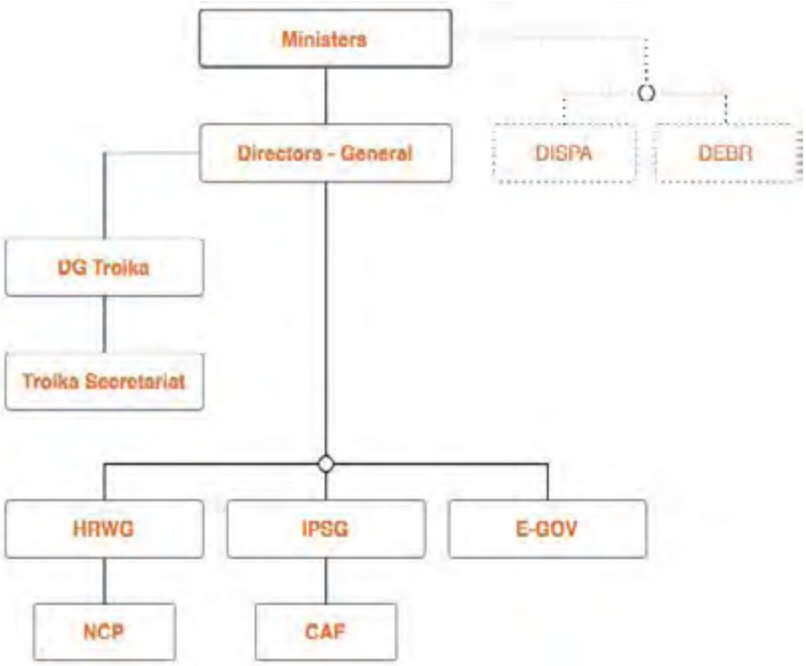
EUPAN is organised on three levels:

- The political level: Ministers and the Commissioner responsible for Public Administration;
- The management level: Directors-General;
- The technical level: Working-Groups.

EUPAN's Mission is to improve the performance, competitiveness and quality of European public administrations by developing new tools and methods based on the exchange of views, experiences and good practices among EU Member States, the European Commission and observer countries, in the field of central public administration.

The vision of the network is to support the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, placing the citizen at the centre of public management, by working in different areas (human resources, innovation, quality, e-government) and with different actors in order to support efficiency and customer orientation in European public services.

EUPAN is therefore a platform for exchange of views, experiences and good practices to improve the performance, competitiveness and quality of European central public administrations.



EUPAN consists of different working groups residing under the assembly of the Directors-General of Public Administration:

1. HRM working group
2. e-Government working group
3. Innovative Public Services Group (IPSG)

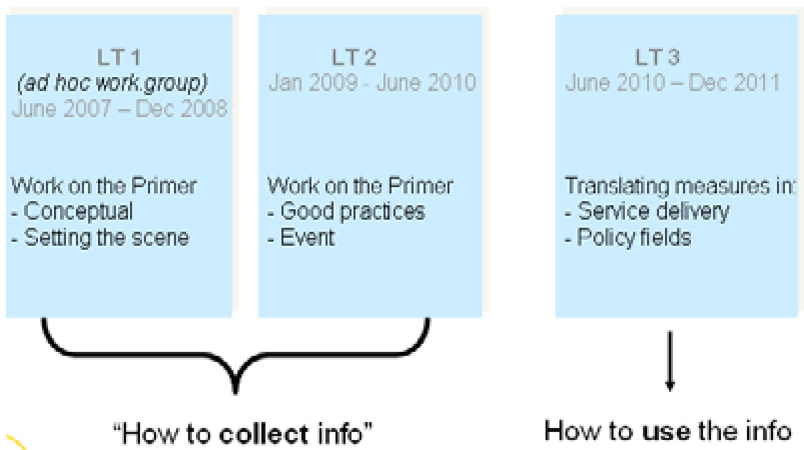
IPSG has for quite some time recognised the importance of customer issues in developing improved public administration and is taking forward a number of activities and projects to enhance capability in this area. In recent years the topic of Customer Satisfaction gain interest and importance and a separate Learning Team on Customer Satisfaction Management was installed.

The topic of Customer Satisfaction

For many years the topic of customer satisfaction has been on the agenda, in recent years this has gained rapidly in importance and was discussed during many meetings. With the support of EIPA (The European Institute of Public Administration), these discussions resulted at the end of 2008 in a European Primer on Customer Satisfaction Management. This mandate was tackled by the Portuguese, Slovenian and France Presidencies (from second half 2007 till the end of 2008.

Based upon the *UK Primer* (Cabinet Office, 2006) this publication explains the relevance of customer focus and the role(s) citizens/customers play in public sector management. It gives an overview of different methods and techniques around customer insight including examining the importance of customer needs, expectations and satisfaction. It gathers a lot of information that is already available on this topic and gives practical examples and cases from public sector organisations all over Europe. This publication will built upon this publication.

Following the publication of the European Primer on Customer Satisfaction Management the 54th DG resolution, at the end of the Spanish Presidency (Summer 2009) mentioned the following "The Directors General give mandate for a period of 18 months to a new CSM Learning Team, reporting to IPSG, to study the transformation of citizen perception data into reforms of public policies and services. The LT will produce guidelines for the Member States on that topic."



In the previous mandate the Learning Team focussed on the first step ie. How to gather information from the citizen / customer. Different kind of instruments / techniques (from how to collect expectations to measure perceptions) were described in the Primer, illustrated during the Spanish Presidency and during the European Conference on Customer satisfaction management in the public sector (March 2010) in Vilnius.

This new mandate should set the next steps into using this collected info and translating gathered info into service delivery improvement and better performing organisations.

Acknowledgements

This publication is the work of many contributors. Our thanks goes to the Directors-General of EUPAN and IPSG for creating a learning team dealing with the topic of customer satisfaction and creating the context. Special thanks to the representatives in the Customer Satisfaction Management Working Group, for their valuable input, useful comments, providing cases and the many fruitful discussions: Eva Nikolov–Bruckner (Austria); Veronique Wathieu (Belgium); Johanna Nurmi (Finland); Françoise Waintrop and Leila Boutamine (France); Panagiotis Passas and Nikos Michalopoulos (Greece); Krisztián Kádár and Anita Fibinger (Hungary); Laura Massoli (Italy); Lina Semetulskyte (Lithuania); Nadine Hoffmann and Thierry Hirtz (Luxembourg); John Nonseid (Norway); Marta Kuzawińska, Izabela Najda-Jędrzejewska, Łukasz Wielocha and Marek Śliwiński (Poland); Fernando Marta (Portugal); José Manuel Diaz and Eloisa Delpino (Spain); Adriana Circiumaru and Monica Dimitriu (Romania), Patrick Staes and Sven Geldof (European Institute of Public Administration – Maastricht) and to all the case presenters and experts who presented on invitation of the CSM learning team their valuable input.

This publication is a joint European collaboration, having its initial roots several years ago. In the context of this particular publication we would like to thank the Belgian, Hungarian and Polish Presidencies of the European Union.

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Personnel and Organisation

Ministry of Public Administration and Justice

The Chancellery of the Prime Minister
Department of Civil Service

EUPAN
european public administration network

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Satisfaction

Sa.tis.fac.tion

/ˌsætɪs'fækʃ(ə)n/

Noun

[via French from Latin satisfactionem, from satisfacere to SATISFY*]*

1. a. *The fulfilment or gratification of a desire, need, or appetite.*
b. *Pleasure or contentment derived from such gratification.*
c. *A source or means of gratification.*

2. a. *Compensation for injury or loss; reparation.*
b. *The opportunity to avenge a wrong; vindication.*

3. Assurance beyond doubt or question; complete conviction.

Introduction

"What should customer satisfaction measurement do for an organisation?"

1. Why study satisfaction?

"We know that 70% of our users are satisfied with our services!" What can we learn from this statement? It would be too much to say that this means nothing, but still this general statement doesn't give us much information about what are the users satisfied with? Where and how can we improve this situation? In many public sector organisations a lot of time and money is still spent on these general satisfaction surveys. The aim of this publication however is to go deeper in understanding satisfaction and also use satisfaction information for organisational improvement.

Customer satisfaction measurement is an important part of the wider set of tools that provide insight into customer needs, behaviours and motivations. In terms of service transformation, it is of key importance. It allows an organisation to understand what their customers value, how this varies between different types of people, and thus, where action can be taken to improve delivery. Most importantly, it is a key strategic tool: sophisticated customer satisfaction modelling approaches allow an organisation to identify the 'drivers' of satisfaction or dissatisfaction – the factors that determine whether the user is happy or not. This information supports the analysis of trade-offs between resource investment within a service. It gives organisations an understanding of the 'drivers' that they can actually shape (as compared to issues to do with perception and the media over which they have little control), and allows them to monitor performance and service evolution over time.

What should customer satisfaction measurement do for an organisation? In short, customer satisfaction measurement should be viewed as a tool to enhance: *Customer focus; An understanding of the key drivers of satisfaction; Strategic alignment; Performance management; and Efficiency and cost saving.*

A. Customer focus

Customer satisfaction measurement enables an organisation to assess how its customers feel about the interactions they may have with it or the services they receive. By carrying out this kind of research, the organisation is giving thought to the customer experience, and shifting the focus of the organisation to be more outward looking. Customer satisfaction measurement is also a straightforward and accessible starting point for introducing customer insight in organisations which may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable with using techniques such as qualitative research as evidence for taking action.

B. An understanding of the key drivers of satisfaction

Customer satisfaction measurement allows an organisation to understand the key drivers that create satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and can also, importantly, help an organisation to differentiate between what people *say* how satisfied they are, and what is *really* driving their satisfaction during a service experience.

C. Strategic alignment

In the medium term, a programme of customer satisfaction measurement can act as a powerful tool for strategic alignment within an organisation. It enables clear objectives to be shared across the different departments or agencies that touch the customer. It makes customer focus particularly on an organisation. It can also provide a common framework and language for motivating and connecting with customer-facing staff, which can help organisations to tackle the challenge of culture change.

D. Performance management

Once customer satisfaction measurement has been put in place, the results can also be used for internal management, to hold people to account and to highlight good performance and areas for improvement. Customer satisfaction can be one way to assess the performance of an organisation, a department within the organisation or even individual staff. This can be applied to rebuild a failing service, maintaining or improving standards on an on-going basis, and ensuring consistent delivery across different services, geographic areas and customer groups. However, it is best to not rely on these methods in isolation from other measures, as customer satisfaction measures tend to be influenced by many drivers, some of which may be outside of the control of the organisation. The use of customer satisfaction measurement for performance management is one of the main focus of this publication, it does have an important role to play in the monitoring of the success of interventions.

E. Efficiency and cost saving

Customer satisfaction measurement also offers opportunities to reduce cost at the same time as improving service. Although it is important to recognise that this is not always the case and that there can be a tension between service and cost, there are also widespread examples of where this double benefit can be realised. These include situations such as reducing avoidable and repeated contact by improving customer communication, and reducing the cost of complaints by getting things done right the first time.

2. Why should we measure satisfaction?

While good research can be used for performance management and/or to meet statutory requirements, the most successful customer measurement programmes are motivated by the desire to put customer focus at the heart of an organisation.

Customer-focused organisations view customer satisfaction measurement as a means rather than an end – as part of a cycle of continuous improvement in service delivery, and as part of the wider toolkit of customer insight techniques. Many organisations regularly track their levels of customer satisfaction to monitor performance over time and measure the impact of service improvement activity.

Customer satisfaction measurement allows an organisation to understand the issues, or key drivers, that cause satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a service experience. When an organisation is able to understand how satisfied its customers are, and why, it can focus its time and resources more effectively.

Customer satisfaction measurement may also enable an organisation to understand the extent to which satisfaction with a service is influenced by factors outside of its control (such as the media) and to differentiate between what people say what influences how satisfied they are, and what is really driving their satisfaction during a service experience. *Customer satisfaction measurement can help an organisation understand what it can and cannot control.*

Most importantly, customer satisfaction measurement helps an organisation focus on its customers, and should galvanise service owners, customer-facing staff, policy, strategy and research staff, as well as senior management, around the aim of improving the customer experience.

3. Managing customer satisfaction: an on-going process of insight and improvement

Measuring customer satisfaction is just one stage in a continuous programme of service transformation. For organisations new to this process, the first stages require a review of what the service provides, where it sits in context with other related services in customers' minds, who its customers are and what information about the customer experience is already available. These contextual elements will be discussed in part 1 of this publication.

After this, quantitative and qualitative research should be conducted with customers and staff to highlight key issues. At this point, decisions will need to be made about which methods should be used. This phase of measuring / gathering info from the users is the content of part 2 of this publication.

Once the info has been gathered the data will need to be interpreted to provide actionable insights for the organisation. What are the lessons we draw from the gathered info? What are examples of drivers for satisfaction? Can we differentiate any user groups (segmentation), etc.? All these element will be elaborated in part 3.

These interpretations and analysis will lead to concrete actions or improvements in the service (delivery). These actions and improvements can be of a different nature, heavily depending on the organisational culture and climate. We will describe the organisational enablers and drivers in part 4 of this publication, with the aim of showing the focus on cultural change rather than on an instrumental approach.

The results will need to be communicated across the organisation in such a way that the findings are taken on board and action taken as a result (part 5). Service levels are translated into indicators and followed up, monitored on a regular basis. For many organisations this process will form a continuous cycle of improvement.

The different steps in measuring, analysing and communicating the findings from customer satisfaction measurement all feed into a cycle of insight and implementation which should become an on-going process driving service improvement throughout an organisation. The success of the process depends on the effective delivery of specific and relevant customer insight into all levels of the organisation and the commitment of senior management to fostering a culture of customer focus. Most organisations will not in fact be starting this process for the first time, but will already be carrying out some of the activities in the cycle. The objective then becomes to ensure that these join up and identify weak links where customer insight could be analysed and communicated more effectively to drive service improvement.

4. Meeting rising expectations

Customer satisfaction measurement is an on-going process that helps an organisation continue to meet rising customer expectations. As customers have experienced improvements to the services they receive in the private and public sectors, this has led to rising expectations of those services. This means that the challenge of delivering increases in customer satisfaction generally becomes greater as service levels improve. Customers are never, finally, ‘satisfied’ – that as new service standards are reached, also expectations rise to meet them. Service providers have to accept that maintaining customer satisfaction is an endless task – it has to become part of the fabric and culture of an organisation.

Customer satisfaction measurement techniques help organisations manage this on-going demand for improvements in service delivery. They allow an organisation to understand how they can improve their services in a way that will directly influence satisfaction levels and also, how to monitor and assess this over time.

The following chapters discuss how customer-focussed organisations build virtuous cycles of service improvement around on-going customer satisfaction monitoring so that they can meet this challenge on a day to day basis.

User

Us·er

/ˈjuːzə(r)/

Noun

1. One that uses: *a user of public transportation.*

2. *Law* The exercise or enjoyment of a right or property.

Part 1: The context of measuring satisfaction

"Do we need measurement and what kind?"

Before getting started on the research and measurement, an organisation needs to look at itself from an internal perspective and, just as crucially, from the viewpoint of the customer. What information do we already dispose of, what information do we need, and for what kind of purposes.

1. Clarifying objectives and understanding your context

Customer satisfaction measurement can be used to fulfil a variety of objectives. These can range from tactical issues connected with how a particular part of the service is delivered, to wider issues about how the organisation is perceived by its users and the wider public.

Before initiating a programme of customer satisfaction measurement, it is therefore critical that key decision makers are clear about the particular priorities for carrying out the research. The insights gathered in customer satisfaction measurement can deliver transformation across an organisation, but this can only be achieved if there is agreement and 'buy in' from all the necessary stakeholders.

Important questions

- What do you want to know?
- And why do you want to know this?
- Assessment of needs and expectations
- Measure satisfaction for benchmarking, reporting…
- Detect specific improvement opportunities?
- Strengthen relations with your users?

There is a lot of money wasted on customer satisfaction research in public services at the moment. Great research can be hidden away in small research teams, whilst strategy and policy teams remain oblivious. This is often the consequence of the failure of those involved to integrate the programme fully into the whole organisation. This is less likely to happen if there are clear objectives for the research from the outset against which its results can be assessed.

Customer satisfaction measurement is not an end in itself; it is a part of a broader cycle of insight, measurement and improvement. Some organisations are already doing a good job of delivering services to happy customers; others have a longer road to travel. An organisation will need to ask itself where in this cycle of improvement it is in order to understand what it needs to measure.

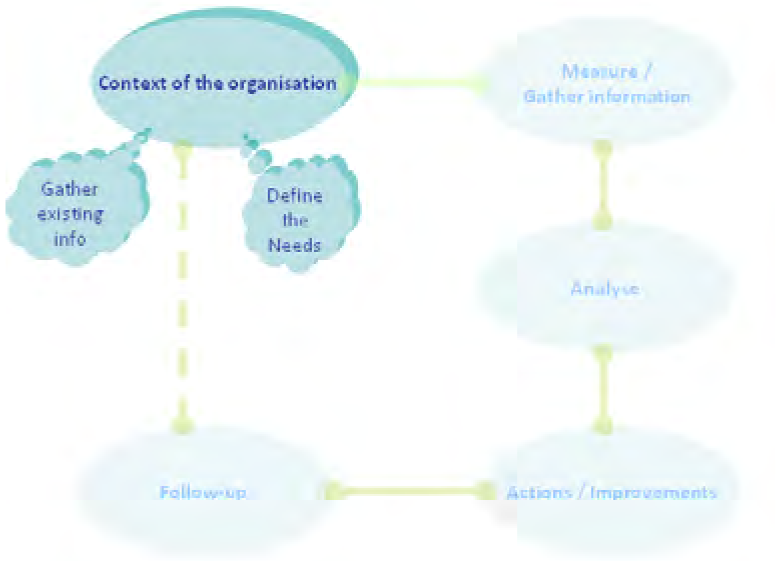
It is also worth considering how the organisation is placed in terms of customer-focussed culture: is this universally accepted and part of the day to day business of managing the service or are there parts of the organisation for which the customer viewpoint will be a new approach? This will affect the way of how well-prepared stakeholders are to receive the findings, what is the best way to communicate with them and what support they will need in terms of additional evidence in order to take action.

There are advantages in focussing initially on areas of the organisation which are well-prepared to take action on the research in order to establish the effectiveness and credibility of the approach before rolling it out more widely. Alternatively it can be beneficial to focus on turning around areas of poor performance, for higher impact. Ultimately, those embarking on a customer satisfaction measurement programme have to be open to in-depth exploring of all areas of the customer experience, even those on which the organisation has not focussed in the past.

2. Assess the current situation

For organisations that are new to customer satisfaction measurement, getting started can seem to be a daunting task. As a first step, it involves understanding what customer satisfaction measurement can do for your organisation and making sure that your key internal stakeholders understand this as well. This section provides a check list of questions to answer before starting to measure customer satisfaction. All organisations, whether they are already carrying out customer satisfaction measurement or are relatively new to it, should consider these points to ensure that they are spending taxpayers' money wisely. Broadly speaking, there are four questions to address, and we will go through each of these in turn in more detail:

- How do I define my service?
- Who are my customers?
- What do I know already?
- What else can I find out?



CASE A GLOBAL APPROACH ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION MANAGEMENT (LUXEMBOURG)

Since 2007, the Luxembourg Ministry for Civil Service and Administrative Reform, in partnership with the Public Research Centre Henri Tudor, started to develop, in the context of the administrative reform action plan, a global methodology on Customer Satisfaction Management. The methodology on Customer Satisfaction Management does not consist in the use of one particular instrument, but in a framework, which enables administrations to find the right evaluation instrument.

The methodology is based on the "Plan-Do-Check-Act"-Cycle and starts with a phase of analyse, in terms of customers, stakeholders and processes in order to define the right instrument after a diagnosis.

This diagnosis includes several steps:

- what are the administration's objectives of the customer satisfaction measurement (specific problems)?
- what are the missions of the administration?
- what are its customer / services couples (number of different services, number of services, activity volume)?
- what is the customer relation mapping (for example: what is the contact frequency)?
- what are the key processes?
- what is the customer segmentation (users group, non-users group, individual person, company, other administration…)?
- what are the main complaints' causes and the mediator's recommendations for this administration?
- is the administration confronted to competition?

Example 1:
An administration that is in charge of controlling the healthcare and security of private sector employees organised a satisfaction survey among its customers. The doctors who realised the control visits conducted the survey.
Example 2:
An important group of non-users were identified for an administration. Specific questions were included in the questionnaire in order to know the reasons of this fact.
Example 3:
In another administration, a key group of stakeholders was identified (less than 10 users): it was suggested to realize direct face-to-face interviews.

After this preliminary assessment phase, the administration chooses the appropriate tool(s) for measuring the satisfaction of its customers. The global approach suggests mixing the use of different tools, combining quantitative and qualitative instruments, to get an exhaustive view of customer satisfaction.

To carry out the measurement, priority is given to existing channels. Moreover, the methodology foresees to implicate the staff of the administration as much as possible. The aim is to choose the best tool in function of the features of the administration.

Once the tool(s) chosen, the administration will be assisted in defining criteria, working-out of the questionnaire, realisation of tests and validation, selection of samples, definition of periodicity, allocation of budget, material and technical resources, and defining internal and external communication.

3. Defining your service

Defining the service that the organisation (or relevant part of it) provides will help inform everything else. The most fundamental things that an organisation should consider are what its service is and what vision it has for it. An important part of thinking about what is the best way to measure customer satisfaction is to understand what kind of organisation you are and what kind of service you deliver. We recognise that most government communication is now multi-channel and understanding your channel footprint and how it maps against different customer groups is one factor in shaping the approach taken to customer satisfaction measurement. Another important factor to understand is how close your service is to a simple transactional process. The table below sets out what we see as the key defining features of transactional as opposed to complex services.

Complex Service	Transactional Service
Typical Characteristics:	*Typical Characteristics*:
Personal interaction	Impersonal
Complicated	Straightforward
Highly differentiated	Undifferentiated
Takes time	Quick to deliver
Multiple occasions	Single occasion
Typical Examples:	*Typical Examples*:
Applying for benefits	Renewing passport
Healthcare	Purchasing Car Tax
Education	Refuse collection

Transactional services are in general one of the most amenable to customer satisfaction measurement. Despite this, with a good understanding of the customer experience, complex services can often be broken down to identify transactional elements for which the same approach can be followed to drive improvements. However, the results should always be interpreted in the context of the broader service experience. This makes the need to use other forms of customer insight alongside customer satisfaction measurement even greater in the case of complex services. These same characteristics are discussed in greater detail in section 2.1 of the toolkit. They are also highly relevant when considering which services are most likely to be comparable in the context of common measurement as discussed in the next chapter.

When assessing what needs to be measured it is important to understand if the customer defines the 'service' in the same way as the organisation; in some cases the customers' definition of the service may cross organisational boundaries and the contribution of different agencies or departments will need to be taken into consideration.

Among the more specific issues to consider when measuring customer satisfaction are:

- How do customers come to use my service?
- Does my service involve an outcome that is likely to affect satisfaction?
- Do customers pay for my service or is it 'free at the point of delivery'?
- Are my customers involved in simple or complex interactions with my service?
- How do customers interact with my service?
- Do customers define my service in the same way that I do?

The answers to these questions can influence both customer perceptions of the service and the way in which the customer satisfaction measurement programme is designed, conducted and analysed. It is therefore important to think through these issues before designing or commissioning customer satisfaction measurement.

A. How do customers come to use my service?

The answers to this question may seem obvious, and will be for some types of service, but it is worth asking as part of the process of defining your service. One of the key issues to consider here is that of customer choice – for example, is the service one that customers opt in to, one that is universally provided (such as refuse collection) or one that customers are required by law to use (such as vehicle tax)? Whichever of these applies, is your organisation the sole provider of the service or can the customer choose between different providers? Choice and competition are almost always present in private sector product and service provision, but often not in public sector provision, and this is one of the key features that distinguishes the two in relation to measuring customer perceptions.

B. Are my customers involved in simple or complex interactions with my service?

Whether a service involves one or two simple 'one-off' transactions or a complex set of on-going interactions between the customer and service provider will have a strong bearing on how customer satisfaction measurement should be conducted. However, even more complex services can be conceptually broken down into single interactions to better understand and define the service. Before designing a customer research programme, consider whether it is better to conduct a single survey for all customers or separate surveys for different customer groups. If service experiences are likely to differ radically for different customer groups, a more customised approach may yield a greater depth of understanding at the analysis stage.

C. Do customers pay for my service or is it 'free at the point of delivery'?

Customers may have different expectations of a service which they pay for directly and one which is paid for through general taxation (but may be perceived as 'free'). This affects the way in which the findings need to be viewed; it also impacts on the type of research techniques that can be used. For example, if a cost can be assigned to different levels of service, then there are research techniques that ask customers to 'trade off' cost against various service elements, helping an organisation understand more about what their customers value.

D. Does my service involve an outcome that is likely to affect satisfaction?

Outcome can influence satisfaction. For example, a service that is universally available (e.g. Child Benefit) is likely to be perceived differently from a service where there is judgement on which customers are eligible (e.g. Tax Credits, Incapacity Benefit). Similarly, the outcome of a civil or criminal court case will influence the satisfaction of the parties involved in the case and the outcome of a planning application will affect the perception of the applicant and other interested parties in the application process. For many services, then, the effect of the outcome on the customer's perceptions of the service needs to be taken into account when measuring customer satisfaction.

E. How do customers interact with my service?

The way in which customers interact with a service varies (e.g. face to face in a local office, over the telephone or by submitting forms online or in the post) and customers may each use a variety of channels. The channels that are used will influence decisions about which data collection methods to use, as well as on the levels of satisfaction with the service.

If a service is largely provided online, for example, online data collection is a viable and even desirable option. Likewise, if the majority of interactions take place in person or by telephone, then online data collection may not be viable, especially if a significant minority of customers do not have access to the Internet.

It is important to recognise that customer needs vary by channel. For example, customers making a payment online may place an emphasis on security and instant confirmation of the transaction, whereas customer satisfaction with the same payment transaction over the telephone may be affected by being kept in a queue or being asked to press additional number options, rather than being able to speak to a call centre agent straight away.

F. Do customers define my service in the same way that I do?

When assessing what needs to be measured it is important to understand whether the customer defines the service in the same way as the service provider. For example, the customer's definition of the service may cross organisational boundaries and the contribution of different agencies or departments will need to be taken into account; the organisation may think of the customer as the recipient of a range of different services that it provides, while the customer may think of the services as distinct and unrelated. In some cases the customer may not even know who provides the service.

The best way to explore how customers define the service is through qualitative interviews with customers, using techniques such as Customer Journey Mapping (see infra) and to tailor questionnaire content and language accordingly. However, it should be recognised that there may be instances where it is not realistic to expect customers to be able to differentiate between organisations or understand some of the complexities of how services are delivered even after extensive questionnaire development.

4. Who are your customers / users?

Do you know who your customers/ users are? This might seem a trivial question, but many public sector organisations have difficulties answering it. Having defined the service, you now need to work out who your customers are. In the public sector this can be a matter of some debate. The view we take here is that a customer is somebody who is a direct recipient of a service, as distinct from a *citizen*, who will typically be a stakeholder (for instance a taxpayer) who may not have a direct connection with the service at that time. For example, even though an individual may not

CASE EVALUATING THE CITIZEN SERVICE CENTRES (CYPRUS)

In 2007, the Public Administration and Personnel Department (PAPD) of the Ministry of Finance evaluated their Citizen Service Centres/ One-stop-shops (CSCs).

It was fundamental to know whether citizens are aware of the existence of the CSCs, and most importantly, the level of quality of the service provided to citizens/ businesses. Also, it was important to collect information which could be utilised for the further improvement of CSCs' operation.

Two surveys were established. The first survey, which was contacted to establish the extent to which the citizens are aware of the existence of the CSCs, was contacted through phone interviews. The second survey, concerning the quality of the service provided to the citizens/ businesses, was contacted through personal interviews with the use of specifically designed questionnaire.

Following the analysis of the information collected, through the questionnaire, the results were reported in the form of a written report with detailed information tables and charts. The report included, also, recommendations made by the citizens regarding the improvement of the CSCs' operations. Based on their recommendations, improvement actions were taken.

Results became widely known to the public via the Media as well as the organisation of a Press Conference held by the Minister of Finance. The fact that citizens' satisfaction from CSCs was measured and we had actually.

have any children of their own they still have an interest in having an education system that is efficient and that provides the skilled workers for the future. Definitions of 'customers' for the purpose of customer satisfaction measurement may range from all residents in a local authority area to people who have had recent involvement with a specific service. Some organisations may have customers with whom they have virtually no contact. When customers have very little contact with a service it may be best to exclude them from the survey and to focus on getting feedback from those who are better placed to comment on the service and so inform service transformation.

CASE QUESTIONING LIFE EVENTS (THE NETHERLANDS)

The Dutch Government has developed a government-wide approach to improve the performance of the public sector by involving citizens. By means of computer assisted web interviewing, more than 3000 Dutch residents are interviewed every year about the services provided in connection with 55 life events (e.g. having a child; starting a business; long-term illness; death of a nearest and dearest; etc.).

The services were assessed at three levels, starting with government as a whole. Respondents were asked mainly about their general impression, not specific experiences. The second level is that of the service provided by the 'chain' associated with a life event, i.e. the service from all organizations, concerned with a specific life event, experienced by the people. This is not a specific product but a 'combination of different but related activities, products and services to meet the needs of particular customers'. Lastly, there is the level of the service provided by the individual organization: this evaluates the service experienced from an organization that in many cases supplies 'only' a particular product.

The Government's aim, as set out in its policy programme, is for government services to score at least a 7 (at a 10 point scale) during the present term of office. The main argument behind this ambition is to realise noticeable improvements for citizens. Yearly the state of the art is measured, and the progress is reported to the parliament. The national, regional and local governments have committed themselves to the "7" objective. Municipalities benchmark customer satisfaction about some public services (incl. certificates, change of address, ID's).

The measurements for 2008 and 2009 show similar results regarding the three distinguished levels. The highest appreciated service delivery was applicable to the life event "buying/selling your car". Less appreciated life events are "receiving a fine, illness, complaints, harassment".

The transferability of this measurement is the perspective. It has a clear added value above existing customer satisfaction measurements. The monitor offers a government-wide picture. Rather than measuring services of individual organisations, the tool measures the experienced service of multiple organisations. In this respect it is more useful for a coordinating ministry.
The tool is more citizen- centric. The monitor shows where things are less appreciated. Nevertheless, To have more in depth understanding of the bottlenecks (in the process), additional methodologies like Customer Journey Mapping could be useful.

The needs of different customers will also have an impact on the research design. Particular attention should be given to customers who are vulnerable or hard to reach. Services provided for these customers may be so different from those for mainstream service users that it is advisable to look at their experiences separately. By doing so an organisation can focus measures on service aspects that are critical for these groups even if the majority of customers never access them (for example translated materials or adapted services for customers with disabilities). If the experiences of these customers are particularly complex it may be worthwhile conducting exploratory qualitative research rather than attempting to interview them in a larger scale quantitative survey. Some issues will be elaborated further.

A. Consider your "customers"

Alongside the internal "due diligence", some work needs to be done upfront on defining the organisation's customers – deciding which "customers" you are focussed on in terms of deepening your understanding of their experience and needs, and seeing your service "through your customers' eyes".

B. Customer versus citizen?

All of us play different roles in our day to day lives; as users of particular products and services; as parents or carers; as citizens of a particular nation state. For customer satisfaction measurement, public service organisations need to be clear as to the particular 'customer' role in which they are interested at any point in time. The distinction between 'clients' and 'citizens' is often made by the fact that the former are direct recipients of government services via dealings with a service provider. 'Citizens', on the other hand, refers to taxpayers who do not actually benefit from a service but may draw an indirect benefit, and who contribute to it and therefore have an interest in it. The public sector simultaneously serves both these constituencies, with sometimes conflicting interests. Similar distinctions can be made between 'users' and 'non-users'. In most cases, it is advisable to focus on users to drive service improvement; this issue is further explored later in this chapter and in the toolkit. General opinion surveys can often provide context for customer satisfaction measurement and ensure that the view of the citizen is not neglected.

C. Segmentation

Recognising the customer base is not uniform and making allowance for a customer segmentation can often help organisations to navigate the issues of 'customer' vs. 'citizen and 'user' vs. 'non-user' and yield deeper insights into customer behaviour and needs. It is particularly important to note that service providers have an obligation to ensure that all current customers have a voice. Customer satisfaction measurement itself can help to ensure equity by giving a voice to the 'silent majority' who do not actively seek to influence public services by complaining or lobbying for their needs.

It is important to remember that there is likely to be more than one type of customer using your service and therefore many different customer viewpoints and customer journeys. This needs to be borne in mind whatever approach is taken to this stage of preparing for customer satisfaction measurement, whether making use of information from the initial insight audit or carrying out a full customer journey mapping exercise. Either way, this is a stage which cannot be omitted if customer satisfaction measurement is to be relevant and effective in understanding the service experience and what contributes to satisfaction.

Segmentation involves grouping customers based on who they are and how they interact with an organisation's services. Once customer segments have been established within an organisation they can then be used to better target operational resources. In addition, they can also provide a common framework and language for referring to customers within an organisation. A segmentation is an approximation – a tool that can allow an organisation to use internal 'short hand' when talking about their customers.

Customers can be segmented in a multitude of ways. At its simplest level, a segmentation may be based on service usage. For example, conducting customer feedback surveys on key service areas of their delivery such as individual and collective conciliation; advisory services; and training events. More sophisticated segments can be derived from administrative data or previous research. Some segmentations are based on demographic or attitudinal characteristics, or a combination of both. Exploratory qualitative research can also be used to tease out how different customers use a service. If an organisation has already identified customer segments, it is generally helpful if customer satisfaction measurement is compatible with these definitions.

D. Customer Journey Mapping

Customer journey mapping - a research tool that explores the experience of using the service through customers' eyes - is a valuable precursor to approaching or reviewing customer satisfaction measurement, as it unpicks the range of journeys that customers encounter. These may differ widely, especially for more complex services or those that involve inter-department or inter-agency working. More information about researching different types of service can be found below in part 2. Indeed, customer journey mapping can be most revealing in understanding how different parts of the experience that may have previously been managed separately relate to each other in the customer's eyes.

E. Channels

A key factor that must also be considered when assessing the customer experience is how different channels are used and how these relate to each other. It is important to think about the most appropriate approach to measurement for each channel, the specific issues that need to be dealt with and the other sources of insight which are available. It is also vital that any assessment of the customer experience has the ability to identify situations when issues with one channel reflect on others.

F. Understanding what actually makes up the customer experience

There is a common perception that customer 'satisfaction' for some services is strongly influenced by perception rather than reality – that satisfaction ratings have more to do with newspaper headlines than the experience an individual has had in their doctor's surgery or local school.

For all services, there is a balance between perception and experience in shaping customers' views of services which needs to be taken into consideration when measuring and analysing customer satisfaction. There are techniques available that allow an organisation to better understand the degree to which the drivers of satisfaction of their own services include factors external to their control (see key drivers infra).

A general rule of thumb is that, where contact with the service is frequent and/or memorable, the actual experience of using the service is likely to be more important in driving customer satisfaction than perception. For some services, particularly those where contact is less frequent, perceptions formed from previous encounters, word of mouth reports or media coverage are likely to significantly influence customer satisfaction. This can lead to a delay between changes being made in the service and their impact being seen in customer satisfaction measures.

The customers who are best placed to provide detailed and accurate information on their experience of using the service are those that have done so most recently. Therefore, to drive through service improvement, the research should be focussed on recent users. Other audiences can be addressed if necessary once this essential requirement for service improvement and on-going monitoring has been covered. The model that has underpinned the satisfaction approach is the disconfirmation theory, which suggests that customer satisfaction with a service is related to the size of the disconfirmation experience; where disconfirmation is related to the person's initial expectations[1]. If experience of the service greatly exceeds the expectations clients had of the service, then satisfaction will be high, and vice versa. In the service quality literature, perceptions of service delivery are measured separately from customer expectations, and the gap between the two, P(erceptions) – E(xpectations), provides a measure of service quality and determines the level of satisfaction.

G. The role of expectations

Customer expectations have a strong role in driving satisfaction. These can be formed by previous experiences of using the service. However, expectations are also driven by a number of other factors which help form the customers' view of what the service experience is going to be like. These include the broad public perception of the service as communicated through the media; the individual experiences of friends, family and acquaintances; and how the service itself communicates about what it will deliver. These factors need to be understood in the context of the specific service, and the last in particular needs to be seen as a potential area for action. By communicating accurately and reasonably about the level of service the customer should expect (e.g. waiting time, time to receive documents, etc.), it can be possible for a service to increase satisfaction without the need for additional resources.

H. A focus on process or outcome?

Finally, there is also a need to recognise the impact of service outcome on customer experience. For simple transactional services the outcome is typically straightforward and so the impact of outcome on experience is easy to understand. But for more complex services such as education or healthcare, satisfaction with the process by which the service is delivered and the outcome for the customer are harder to separate. Process failures are likely to contribute to a poorer outcome (or perceived outcome), while a negative outcome may cause the customer to have a more negative perception of the process (e.g. in the case of a failed benefits claim or refusal of planning permission).

Even where process and outcome are entwined, it is still possible to use customer satisfaction measurement to drive service improvement. The focus of measurement can be kept on the process by having a thorough understanding of the experience and careful survey design. Analysis can also be used to identify which parts of the process contribute most to customer satisfaction and are therefore the priorities for intervention. For example, Police Forces around the country measure satisfaction for victims of crime at a number of levels, recognising that communications with the police can be as important a driver of overall satisfaction with the process as a positive outcome in terms of bringing the criminal to justice.

[1] There are in fact a number of other ways in which expectations are defined, for example minimum/tolerable/acceptable levels of service and deserved (the performance level based on the time, effort and/or money invested).

5. What do we know already?

Most organisations have a range of information that can help identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current service being provided, even if it only provides a partial picture. Taking time to understand the information already available before undertaking customer satisfaction measurement should ensure that unnecessary research is not commissioned and that any research that is carried out is fully informed and relevant. Key questions to be considered include:

- Is my organisation currently monitoring customer satisfaction?
- Is my organisation currently reporting a high level of customer satisfaction?
- Are there specific issues with our service at the moment that we currently know about?
- Where is my organisation in the journey of improving customer satisfaction?

Sources of information include:
Administrative data can be a rich source of information for organisations. This can include:

- call volumes data e.g. waiting times, 'hang-ups' and answered calls,
- website statistics e.g. number of people visiting website, pages viewed and return visits,
- Applications data e.g. benefit claims over a period of time.

Customer feedback (which might include complaints, suggestions and compliments) can be used to identify current areas for improvements as well as to inform areas to be included in customer satisfaction measurement.

Many organisations conduct *mystery shopping* in order to monitor the services being provided to its customers. This can be a valuable source of information and can inform areas to be covered in customer satisfaction measurement.

Existing survey data. Taking time to find out what survey data already exists is a valuable process that is often overlooked. Different research may be carried out in different parts of the organisation.

6. Who should be involved?

The most important stakeholders in customer satisfaction measurement are, of course, the service customers themselves. From an internal perspective, however, there are a number of professional groups whose involvement in the research will ultimately determine whether or not it is effective. The customer measurement programme itself may be executed by the research community within an organisation, but for implementation to be effective it needs to be 'owned' by the organisation:

- *Senior management* can make the difference between good research that remains unused and genuine service transformation. The involvement of senior management not only signals that the work is viewed as strategically important, it also means that those who have the power to act on the findings are more likely to do so.

- *Political leaders* are important to help agree and articulate the policy commitments in terms of service improvement that can be undertaken as a result of the findings. In particular, the early involvement of politicians in recognising the need to improve customer experience can lead to more timely action on the findings of the research. This is particularly important in local government where the leadership tends to be more closely involved in service design and delivery.

- *Policy and Strategic staff* should use the findings to support strategic decision making.

- *Research and Insight staff* will need to analyse the data and share findings effectively.

- *Communications staff* should be involved in communicating the research findings and resulting actions to internal and external audiences, including customers.

- *Operational management* need to understand how the findings can be applied to their area of responsibility. Customer satisfaction measurement will give a sense – at a very tactical level - of how customers feel about the service they are providing and the performance of staff involved in delivery of the service. Service directors need to understand why they are obtaining these results and how they can be used to drive forward improvements in delivery.

- *Customer-facing staff* are incredibly valuable in customer research programmes for many reasons. From their day to day work, customer-facing staff will have ideas about how customers view the experience of a service and the reasons why experiences are satisfactory or not. When preparing the way for customer research, it is important to tap into this insight as it can guide the focus of the work and provide valuable material for questionnaire development. Customer-facing staff are also critical stakeholders when it comes to implementing the results of customer satisfaction measurement: it will often be their job to deliver the changes which can bring improvements in the customer experience. Their commitment and buy-in is essential.

Do we need the research?

- What do you want to find out?
- What are the objectives of the research? Why do you want to know this? Do we have a clear focus?
- How will the results be used? Will they actually be used?
- What do we already know?
- Better ways to get the information?
- Cost-benefit analysis?

Measurement

Mea.sure.ment

/ˈmeʒə(r)mənt/

Noun

1. The act of measuring or the process of being measured

2. A system of measuring

3. The dimension, quantity, or capacity determined by measuring

Part 2: Gather/measure information

"How do we gather citizen/customer satisfaction information?"

After having defined the general context and the aims, the organisation needs to make a choice in the instrument (or a mix of tools) which it wants to use in getting an insight in the level of satisfaction and the specific improvement areas.

Most organisations however skip the first phase and start immediately in measuring or gathering information. We specifically use this double terminology, because some of the presented techniques are rather gathering info than the 'hard' measurement.

There are many different ways in collection satisfaction information. The experience that customers have of services can be explored in various ways. Qualitative research techniques can be used to better understand a service through the customers' eyes, and to explore in depth their experiences and expectations. Quantitative research can provide numerical measures of customer satisfaction and statistically representative findings to assess the performance of a service and provide information to drive improved service quality. The techniques will be briefly described below, starting with customer/user satisfaction surveys.

1. Satisfaction surveys

A. Quantitative methods

Quantitative methods include a range of approaches including surveys. These approaches use highly structured techniques of data collection that allow for quantification, hypothesis testing, statistical analysis and the ability to generalise from the data.

One of the criticisms of quantitative techniques is that in attempting to measure and compare attitudes and behaviours, much of the in-depth understanding and meaning is lost. Survey questionnaires are a widely used tool and whilst they allow for relatively simple administration of some form of feedback, they often fail to address the issues of concern, or support the development of a real understanding of the diversity of experience. They rely on the ability to articulate or write responses to questions in the way that they are presented in the survey.

CASE FRANCE

The General Directorate for State Modernization (DGME) has led a large-scale study to quantify user satisfaction with public services following twenty major life events (marriage, birth, job loss, retirement,...)

In this study our goal is:

1) to know whether it is possible to measure the satisfaction of users on a life event **perimeter** (in a life event like loosing one's job or getting married for example, people have contact with several administrations and not only one). This life event approach leads us to add new determinants of quality service which particularly highlights the hardships of users before they contact an administration and especially when a multiplicity of administrations are involved in a service delivery (identify the relevant office to contact, consistency among sources of information)
2) to know whether the **drivers of satisfaction were generic or, on the contrary, specific to each life event**
3) to highlight **the drivers of satisfaction** in each life event and provide them to the different ministries in order to help them to re-think their action plan by asking themselves: are we dealing with the factors which **will have the largest impact on the users' satisfaction?**

In this publication we will refer at different occasions to this French approach.

Quantitative methods are useful where statistical representativeness and the ability to generalise to a larger population is a goal of the research or consultation. They offer the ability to gather views on service quality from across a large number of respondents, in order to compare views within groups of a larger population and track change over time. In practice they are often combined with qualitative methods.

Surveys are a significant activity across government and can help to inform customer insight. The data from quantitative surveys is often useful for providing robust evidence to support a business case for change.

B. General satisfaction surveys and opinion polls

A survey is a systematic gathering of data that uses a questionnaire to gather the same information from each individual service user, usually based on a sample drawn from a wider population which may be all service users or a smaller sub-group. General surveys are useful to get a broad picture of the views of service users on a range of issues.
General satisfaction surveys or opinion polls that take place every three to five years are the most common method used to assess the views of service users. The measurement of satisfaction brings a number of conceptual and practical difficulties. Satisfaction surveys are often done largely to meet perceived regulatory expectations. Whilst this does not necessarily mean that the data is not useful, the focus may be less on ensuring surveys which provide practical, useful local information than on meeting requirements. Often surveys are an attempt to assess general satisfaction, to measure change over time and to build an up-to-date profile of the client base. It will not usually be necessary to conduct a major annual survey of all users unless there has been a substantial change to key aspects of service delivery.

CASE CIVIC EVALUATIONS (ITALY)

In Southern Italy, the cooperation between the Italian Department for Public Administration and Innovation and the non-profit organisation *Cittadinanzattiva* resulted in a new citizen participation initiative related to service quality. Citizens were given the opportunity to evaluate local services and facilities, not just through citizen surveys but as civic evaluators who provide information to local councils about the state of public services and infrastructure and who contribute to prioritising improvements. In particular, it focused on issues of the maintenance of green space and roads, street lighting, public transport, garbage collection, cultural and social events.

The first phase of the project started in November 2009. A focus group at national level discussed the elements, dimensions and indicators of urban quality. The focus group consisted of public managers, citizens, members of citizen associations and technical and professional experts who were considered to be "issue experts". As a next step, one or several quality dimensions for each of these issues were defined, for example for the issue of public safety the dimensions are: physical safety of people and safety of public infrastructure. Last but not least, the quality indicators were defined in order to operationalize the quality dimensions, for example, for the dimension "safety of public infrastructure" two indicators were defined:

1) Number of houses declared unfit for use (this information needs to be provided by the local authority concerned);
2) Number of threats to safety on the selected road (this information has to be provided directly through the monitoring by citizens – e.g. by counting potholes on the road surface, broken pavements, wrecked steps, inclining poles).

The working group then worked with representatives of *Cittadinanzattiva* to prepare the tools for the civic evaluation, including an operational manual and monitoring grids. Afterwards, the challenge was to get citizens engaged. The local authorities and the local representatives of *Cittadinanzattiva* marketed the project. Not surprisingly, the take-up was particularly positive in those local authorities which were able to embed the evaluation project in other participation initiatives and which already had a strong network of associations at local level and thus much social capital.

Interested citizens were then invited to a joint one-day seminar where they learned about the overall purpose of the project and were trained practically in how to use the monitoring grid. After the training, the citizens involved together with the local representatives of *Cittadinanzattiva*, decided collectively that those zones, which were seen as particularly significant for the city, should be monitored (for example because they contained important public buildings, a train station and so on). The citizen monitoring then started, either involving the observation of specific aspects of public services or infrastructure (e.g. indicator 2) or simply requesting public agencies to provide data which they already collected (e.g. indicator 1).

Once the participating citizens had filled out the monitoring grid, they met together to agree their overall assessment of the quality of the public services and infrastructure and to prioritise improvement actions. This was all included in a report shared with the local administration.

More information on the improvement actions in part 4 (see infra).

C. Different types of surveys; the pros and cons

Different types of surveys are possible. A choice has to be made between: face-to-face, with interviewers asking direct to respondents, via post, telephone, mail, or web-based. We describe here some advantages and disadvantages of the different types[2]

Face-to-face surveys

- Surveys conducted face-to-face are able to collect fuller, more complex data.

[2] Communities Scotland (2006), *How to gather views on service quality*, Scottish Executive, p.72.

- The use of an interviewer gives more control over who actually answers the questions. This will be important with strict statistically representative sampling designs.
- Designed with care and well-administered they will generally have better response rates than other types of survey.
- They are likely to be more expensive than other options.

Postal or self-completion surveys

- These are less reliable, need to be shorter than face-to-face surveys and use simple, 'tick boxes' types of questions.
- They can be cost-effective and provide anonymity which may prompt a better response rate for more sensitive topics.
- Whilst many organisations may prefer postal surveys on cost grounds, it may not always be the most appropriate approach.
- There is a higher risk that some groups will be over- or under-represented, such as those with language/literacy difficulties or with support needs.

Telephone surveys

- These need to be relatively short and straightforward.
- Some categories of people will be systematically under-represented.
- Telephone surveys may be useful for some service-specific surveys where there is a contact number for each person from which to draw a sample.

Web surveys

At present, web-based or email surveys are of limited value in customer research in public service contexts because the distribution of access to the web is not evenly spread across all sections of the population.

Before discussion other ways to gather info, we first give an overview why organisations hesitate or are tempted to launch customer satisfaction surveys.[3]

Why Organizations Hesitate	Reasons to Undertake Surveys
Limited resources (staff, time, money)	Information obtained from surveys can help you use resources more efficiently by identifying programs that are not efficient or effective.
Other priorities or concerns	Survey data can help you prioritize your services and investment policies based on the preferences and feedback provided by your citizens.
Appropriate survey design is too complex or sophisticated for our staff to undertake at this time	Correct sample and questionnaire design are critical in getting a statistically representative data and the right responses to questions. The wording of the questionnaire and, in some cases, multiple questions addressing the same issue are necessary to get the correct answers. However, most countries have statistical institutions that can help with the former and training on questionnaire design can quickly build up skills in this area. Also, sophisticated survey procedures are not always needed.

[3] Source: Adapted from Nayyar-Stone et al. (2002).

Fear of reprisal from regional or national government based on performance revealed by the survey	Performance information revealed by a survey can be used as a benchmark or baseline to show positive and improved results in the future.
Fear of a "report card" or evaluation	Survey results can be used not only to identify problem areas, but to provide appropriate commendations or rewards to staff when the data show major improvements or maintenance of prior service levels in the face of adverse external factors. Also, knowing the current status of service delivery and having clear targets to aim for can be very motivating for the service provider.
There is only one provider of the service who does not face any competition	Even in the absence of competition, survey information can lead to more efficient use of limited resources, improve service delivery, and develop a better relationship with citizens, all of which are key to holding an elected office.
Low view of the literacy and intelligence of the average citizen	Even with high illiteracy levels, citizens are the consumers of public services and their feedback and evaluation can be used to make service delivery more efficient.

2. Front line staff information on citizen/customer insight

The front line is a rich vein of customer insight which is often overlooked. Public sector staff working in call centres, contact centres and walk-in centres as well as front line staff in hospitals, schools and police stations, are in contact with the public on a daily basis. Typically they have an excellent idea of what is important to their customers, what customers would like to have more of, what frustrates them and what they would change.

Organisations in the public and private sectors that are customer-centric have formal processes in place to ensure that front line customer information – including complaints - is fed back into the organisation. These processes support a cycle of continuous improvement and tailoring of the services around customer needs. In this part we will further describe in depth the method of managing complaints and suggestions.

Many research and consultation exercises can be conducted by in-house staff. Front line or operational staff can be involved at all stages of the research and consultation process in much the same way as service users themselves. The case for doing so is much the same in terms of building on their unique knowledge and enhancing the credibility and use of the findings. Not all approaches will require detailed knowledge of research techniques and there is a number of options for providing specialist input where this is necessary.

It will be valuable for all organisations to consider how to make more systematic use of existing contacts between staff and service users and feedback from staff. Of course, the views of staff are important because they will be expected to implement any changes to service delivery; but they are also an important and underused source of intelligence about day to day service delivery and customer attitudes. The most common form of research amongst staff is some kind of staff satisfaction survey which looks at their perceptions of the organisation and the customer. Such surveys share the limitations and drawbacks of all surveys.

CASE ENGAGING CITIZENS IN THE PROCESS OF INSTITUTIONAL REFORMING AND DECISIONAL TRANSPARENCY (ROMANIA)

The aim of the project of the Romanian National Agency of Civil Servants in partnership with the Association *Assistance and Programs for Sustainable Development – Agenda 21* was to increase the role of civil society in promoting good governance and citizens' participation in the process of designing local level policies. Therefore, a Citizens' Charter and an awarding system of good practices of engaging citizens in the process of institutional reforming and decisional transparency have been developed.

Two surveys provided the necessary information for the development of both: a survey addressed to citizens and one addressed to civil servants. The structure of the two questionnaires followed the *basic methodology of EUPAN* and the *servqual instrument* (service quality), but was adapted to the local needs and the national context. Thus, the questionnaires' structure differs from the servqual, containing:

- questions on general satisfaction in regard of the public service and the frequency in which the citizens interact with the public administration
- the two key elements – perception and requests – are measured in two different sections of the questionnaires, in the same questions to have the possibility to compare them
- two opened questions regarding the most performing service of an institution were introduced for clarification
- a section of socio-demographic data of the respondents to create their profile (the profile of the local public service clients)
- a section of questions of the attitude of the respondents while they were responding to the questionnaire.

1161 citizens completed the questionnaire regarding their satisfaction with the quality of the services they are provided and citizens' needs. 958 questionnaires civil servants completed the questionnaire regarding their perception about the quality of the public services.

Both questionnaires followed the same pattern so that it can reveal the differences between the two groups concerning the perception on the quality of services offered by the respective authorities and local institutions. In general, the public servants had a more positive perception compared to the citizens' perception, e.g.:

	Civil Servants	Citizens
High level of trust	72,7%	51,2%
Satisfied or very satisfied with the level of transparency	80,5%	46,4%
Satisfied or very satisfied with the level of efficiency	78,8%	46,1%

A possible explanation for the differences in perception was that while citizens perceptions are based either on personal experience in working with the public institutions or on the traditional lack of trust in the state institutions, civil servants were encouraged rather to protect the image of the institution in which they work.

The civil servants showed that the top five characteristics of a high quality of services delivered to citizens were: competence of employees, response time, high interest shown to citizens' complaints and suggestions, employees' courtesy, offering priority to issues raised by citizens. But comparing this perception with the one of the citizens, we could see that the highest degree of dissatisfaction of the citizens concerns: the answer given by the civil servants to the citizens' complaints and suggestions, the priority given to issues raised by citizens and how representative of public institutions took into account issues raised by citizens.

Based on the findings from these surveys, a Citizen's Charter was developed (see infra, part 5)

Staff is an underused resource in reviewing the quality of services. There is scope for more active and creative approaches to gathering staff feedback that go beyond occasional staff surveys. The use of existing staff-service users' contacts is likely to be relatively simple and less resource intensive than many other approaches to research and consultation. This may mean more systematic recording, analysis and discussion of contacts between front-line staff and service users and then feeding this into decision making. An action-research approach to service quality would seek to engage both with service users and staff. There may be scope for joint training provision. Research amongst staff – particularly where they are able to share stories about their work – may highlight critical incidents or significant events that illustrate what it is about the service that works well or particular difficulties that they face. There are a number of key issues in relation to using staff feedback in this way:

- The purpose and use of staff feedback should be conveyed to staff. Clear demonstration of its use will be important to encourage this process.
- Approaches that are used should complement other methods that engage directly with service users.
- A range of approaches to gather the views and experience of staff should be used and all staff should have a chance to participate in some way and have an opportunity to validate the conclusions.
- There may be scope for joint staff and service user research, consultation or training.
- The implications of the feedback for service delivery should be identified, reported to all key audiences and acted upon.
- It is important to identify any further research and consultative needs.

3. Customer journey mapping / process analysis

A customer journey map is a way to describe the experiences of a customer during their interaction with a service or set of services and the emotional responses these provoke - from their first consideration of a related need, to receiving the service outcome.

In government, customer journeys are often complex, with multiple interactions taking place over extended timeframes. Customer journey mapping is a particularly useful tool to help describe the customer's experience of a series of services, their thought processes and reactions. It can help to ensure a consistently good service experience, optimising outcomes for all customer groups, increasing efficiency and ensuring the services, which often span organisational boundaries, are designed correctly the first time.

System mapping is a way of looking at what really happens in public service delivery, rather than what is supposed to happen. It is primarily about trying to see where you can improve your service delivery and involves all the people who are part of service delivery processes, including the service users themselves. Whilst it is similar to process mapping which produces flow charts of procedures or stages in service delivery, system mapping works slightly differently in that it will also involve service users. Where there is an identified issue, such as the allocation process or decanting due to major works, system mapping can be used. The process should be used with a group of people who all have some experience of the issue under question. It would start with a facilitator describing the group an archetypal situation based on what is supposed to happen in these circumstances. All participants who have experience of this process are asked to contribute their real-life experience of what actually happens in these types of situations.
Many different possibilities are 'mapped' in some way, perhaps through a flow chart or spider diagram. In this way, the realities of what actually happens when the procedures are implemented are illuminated for all parties. The numbers of crucial links in a chain of tasks

or events will be shown and assumptions highlighted about who will do what and when. Problems of coordination and failure to deliver at the right time in the process reveal the links between different bits of the system. By working with all parties within the system, the connections, communication links, delays and the many uncertainties involved are revealed to all.
This process can raise a number of challenging questions. Process' participants are likely to begin to question why things are done in the way that they are and whether they can be done differently. These approaches can lead to real breakthroughs in perspectives and the use of language. It is possible to shift from a focus on 'solving a problem' (such as reducing time) to generating the possibility that this could be a positive experience for the service user. This reframes the issue from a problem to be solved – where blame for difficulties can be shifted to someone else in the system. Instead, the issue can be turned on its head and the focus shifted to the service user experience or those of other departmental staff. System mapping can help to create an understanding of the need for organisations, staff and service users to work together to achieve a desired outcome.

4. Citizen/customer panels

A panel is essentially a group of citizens/customers or service users who have consented to be part of a pool of people that will be used to select samples to take part in periodic research and consultation exercises. They are sometimes referred to as user groups. A variety of methods may be used to collect data from panels; for example, panels can be used as a basis for sampling for a survey or a source of people to recruit to focus groups or other qualitative approaches. Panels need to be actively monitored and refreshed to maintain the desired level of 'representativeness' and are not immune to all the common problems of research fatigue that are evident in other approaches.

Establishing a panel is a convenient and visible way to recruit people willing to provide feedback on their experience of services. As with any sample, a key issue is to decide how important strict statistical representativeness is given the purposes for which the panel will be used. To be statistically representative, panels should be selected in the same way as samples for general surveys. Basing a panel on a non-probability sample may be acceptable given the purpose and use to be made of the data. In practice, panels tend to be based on self-selection; willing people are recruited through targeted mailings and publicity. However, quota sampling can be used to ensure that the membership reflects the demographic profile of the wider population of service users. Panel members may differ from the wider population by the fact that they agreed to take part and over time may become conditioned and more knowledgeable than the population that they are supposed to 'represent'.

Loss of panel members over time means that the panel needs to be continually refreshed. It may be difficult to recruit members from lower socio-economic groups, ethnic minorities and young people. Downward trends in response rates over time may highlight research saturation or disillusionment amongst panel members. Panels require active management; the composition of the panel should be reviewed regularly and new members recruited. Despite their convenience, panels may not be the best way to seek feedback from certain groups who may be missed out by traditional recruitment methods. Research focusing on the views of certain groups, such as young people, ethnic minority communities and people with disabilities may require separate, targeted recruitment to ensure sufficient numbers and the participation of these key groups. Recruitment through voluntary and community groups is likely to produce more informed feedback. As with other approaches, panels should be part of a wider research and consultation strategy rather than seen as the answer to all consultation requirements.

CASE TAX OFFICE 2 ŁÓDŹ–BAŁUTY (POLAND)

Since 2006, the Polish Tax Office No. 2 Łódź–Bałuty (Drugi Urząd Skarbowy Łódź–Bałuty) made special efforts to improve their service to citizens/users with disabilities. By establishing cooperation with organizations representing and associating the disabled, the Head of the Office hoped to obtain valuable insight into the needs of disabled persons, in order to enhance their social functions, and, in particular, to facilitate the process of fulfilling their fiscal duties.

The Head of the Office organized a number of meetings with representatives of the aforementioned organizations, and consulted with them, directly, the accommodation implemented in the office and aimed at improving the conditions in which the disabled are served. He has also applied for opinions on manuals in which guidelines were set out for providing service to the disabled. This resulted in a number of effective actions: an instruction manual and training in sign language and communicating with the blind for the employees, architectural improvements (an access ramp for wheelchairs, including bright colours and contrast in materials displayed in wall-mounted display cases, etc.).

5. Group interviews and focus groups

In-depth qualitative interviews can be conducted with groups as well as individuals. Some groups may already be in existence. These can be used for qualitative research and consultation purposes. Organisations could make better use of existing groups for deliberate research and consultation purposes, while other groups may be specially convened for the purposes of the research. Depending on the purpose of the research and consultation, the research topic and related themes may be quite specifically defined by the organisation. At other times, the topic and themes will be more open and flexible to enable the organisation to freely adapt questions in response to the issues brought up by the service users themselves.

A focus group is an in-depth interview with a small group of people (approx. 6-10) specially convened for the purpose of discussing a particular topic. Group members are specially selected and invited by the organisation on the basis that they have specific experience or knowledge about the topic. In a focus group, the emphasis is on ensuring that all parties have the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

CASE MYSTERY USER METHODOLOGY (GREECE)

In the context of the “Greek Tax Agency Benchlearning and Evaluation Project”, the Observatory for the Greek Information Society developed in 2008 the Mystery User Methodology (MUM).

MUM was applied for the real-time evaluation of the income tax statement submission e-service by the citizens, while they were using the service. It is used to improve the current service delivery and thus make it more effective, while it also takes under consideration the recommendations of the users, thus making the service more inclusive/ citizen centric. Participative measurement allows going beyond a mere technocratic approach, by enriching it with citizens’ active involvement in identifying problems and evaluating the solutions that would improve service delivery. It promotes targeted change, mostly in the implementation level.

The size of the sample is by necessity small and a choice of involving a mean of 30 users is perfectly aline with the practice of other participatory techniques (i.e. usability test) where the sample size ranges from a minimum of 12 users to a maximum of 35-40. The selected users have to perform a number of tasks related to the usage of the e-service: locate service; log in to service; locate form; complete form; submit form. As they try and perform these tasks, they fill in a semi-structured questionnaire in real time. The results express the users’ evaluation with respect to the tasks undertaken in order to complete the transaction. The questionnaire contains structured as well as open questions.

A) Structured Questions: At the end of each task the user is given a questionnaire related to the task he/she already carried out. The questionnaire examines various aspects of the interface. The variables are measured on a Likert-scale, e.g.:

Task1: Locate E1 (income declaration) Service

		1	2	3	4	5	
Are there different ways to reach the E1 service?	One way						Many ways
Was it difficult to locate the service?	Easy						Difficult
Did it take long to locate it?	Short						Long
Were the colors, fonts, font size easy to read?	Easy						Difficult
When you found the E1 web page, how sure were you that you were at the correct service?	Very sure						Not sure

B) Open Questions: The users were also requested to provide a general evaluation (free text) of the whole online procedure, in terms of: navigation, user control, language and content, online help and user guides, system and user feedback, consistency, and architectural and visual clarity.

The results are gained in the form of percentage of positive/ negative/ neutral answers in the various questions of each task. Then, a proper evaluation scale is applied in order to aggregate the data and help interpret the results in the form of a composite index (total satisfaction).

Properly adapted, the methodology can be used for the evaluation of any given eGovernment service.

A group interview is more likely to be conducted with pre-existing groups and arranged to fit in with the normal meeting circumstances of the group. It is likely to be conducted in a more open and flexible way than a focus group and this has the advantage that the topic is likely to be more engaging because it can be shaped more readily by the concerns of the group members. In a group interview, although the organisation is also concerned to ensure that all members of the group have the opportunity to speak, the researcher has more freedom to pursue a relevant or interesting theme with one or two group members.

Group interviews and focus groups are particularly useful for researching the views of numerically small groups whose views may be underrepresented in general surveys, such as minority ethnic communities or young people. These approaches can be used to enhance the quality of other research approaches, for example by assisting in the development of survey questionnaires, or they can be used to gather more detailed information about particular aspects that emerged as important during a survey.
However, in-depth group interviews may not be the most appropriate method if the research issues are sensitive and inappropriate for group discussions, if convening a focus group presents practical difficulties or if there are no suitable existing groups. In these circumstances individual in-depth interviews are likely to be more useful.

6. Mystery shopping

Mystery shopping is the use of individuals trained to observe, experience and measure any customer service process, by acting as service users or customers and reporting back on their experiences in a detailed and objective way. This procedure can be used over the telephone, in face to face situations or by email. The idea is to test out the actual customer experience of services. It might be used as a free-standing exercise, to follow up an issue identified through other methods such as a satisfaction survey or after analysing recent complaints. Telephone-based mystery shopping may be well suited to covering any large, dispersed population. There may be scope to undertake this kind of approach on an on-going basis to get more regular feedback. The exercise involves deciding on suitable scenarios – typical situations or issues that service users may present, rather like 'frequently asked questions'. The whole quality and value of the mystery shopping process depends on the design and execution of the scenarios used to test service delivery. Experience suggests that this approach should not be too ambitious. Planned but simple approaches are likely to be most effective. This approach raises a number of issues of ethical research practice. It is important that staff and other appropriate parties such as trade unions know that mystery shopping is planned. They should not be told exactly when and where it is to happen as this may undermine the process. As with the use of complaints such as feedback, the critical issue is the culture of the organisation and an attitude that is not about allocating blame for poor performance but to draw out wider lessons. This means that the identity of the parties is not really the point. There should also be feedback to staff on the findings and the intended follow up actions based on using this technique.

The scenarios to be used in mystery shopping exercises should be:

- Relevant: designed to test the specific service on which data is required.
- Credible: not too ambitious, but mimicking natural service user behaviour and able to be enacted convincingly. The use of jargon or technical language will jeopardise the exercise.
- Practical: simple, brief and appropriate. Complex or unrealistic scenarios will compromise the quality of the data and the exercise and will place an undue burden on staff time.
- Safe: not risking the personal safety of the mystery shoppers themselves.
- Objective: focusing on factual information. Recording what happened, rather than how the shopper feels about it in order to be consistent across all assessments made by different shoppers. However, more subjective assessments may be used to assist

in interpretation of data. These may include perceived confidence of staff or overall satisfaction with the service, for example.

Mystery shopping: checklist

- The scenarios used should be relevant, credible, practical and safe.
- The sample size and selection should be appropriate for the kind of analysis required and should reflect the usual pattern of inquiries across the service.
- The objectivity of the exercise should be safeguarded by careful selection of mystery shoppers and thorough training.
- Data should be recorded consistently and analysed objectively and appropriately.
- Data should be reported only at an aggregate level and the anonymity of staff protected.
- Staff and trade unions should be told that mystery shopping is planned and that they may be involved in the decision-making process.
- The findings should be written up in an appropriate and accessible way and reported to all key audiences, including staff.
- The implications of the research for service delivery should be identified.

7. Using comments, compliments and complaints as feedback

Complaints schemes should be used as a valuable source of service user feedback on service quality. Complaint schemes tend to record formal complaints in which the service user is seeking explicit redress and of course, it is vital to regularly monitor and act on such complaints. However, many 'complaints' may go unrecorded, yet both formal and informal complaints and suggestions can be a valuable source of information about service users' views of service provision. They can be used alongside other data collection techniques to help assess performance, highlight areas of good practice and to help improve service quality and delivery. More detailed information can be collected to help identify patterns or causes of complaints in relation to geographical areas or service user characteristics. It may be necessary to train staff to see informal 'complaints' as a valued source of learning and to record them consistently. It may also be necessary to allow time to investigate the substance of a 'complaint' (beyond the formal need to establish if redress is warranted) in order to understand what happened and to draw out the wider lessons.

If complaints are to be useful as a source of feedback it is likely that complaints systems will need to be reviewed to ensure clarity and consistency in recording and analysis. All complaints including informal ones should be recorded and classified appropriately across the organisation, although it will be important to ensure that this does not become too bureaucratic or burdensome for staff. It may be helpful to consider what is actually meant by a complaint. For example, if service users request information but these requests can only be recorded as complaints, statistics reflecting the number of complaints received may be misleading.

CASE COMPLAINT HANDLING IN THE STATE FOOD AND VETERINARY SERVICE (LITHUANIA)

The State Food and Veterinary Service (SFVS) of the Republic of Lithuania is the competent authority to perform controls in the food safety sector. The SFVS takes into consideration each message and complaint from the inhabitants of Lithuania about potential infringement of the established requirements. A centralized system for the reception, registration and analysis/investigation of consumer complaints (messages) is implemented for this purpose. The system is operational in the whole country.

The goal of the project was to set up a uniform SFVS and territorial SFVS customer service system facilitating the improvement of:

- service quality;
- registration of the incoming messages;
- forwarding of the messages for investigation;
- analysis of the massages and preparation of reports;
- integration of the results of inspections on quality and safety of food based consumer messages into the general food control system;
- registration of the information on the infringements of animal welfare requirements.

The system ensures expedient investigation of consumer complaints, efficient operation of SFVS inspectors, and feedback between the control authorities and the applicant. Its operation is based on the usage of all the necessary technical and administrative capacities of the SFVS:

- a free phone line and email for registration of complaints and information;
- an electronic form at the SFVS website;
- a computer database system for registration and quick dispatches of information on consumer complaints.

The registered complaints are transmitted automatically by electronic means to the relevant local units of the SFVS and based on this information the inspection of the business operators is carried out. The applicant is informed about the results of the inspection as well, usually by email, post or telephone.

As soon as the consumer complaint is recorded in the database, the inspector in charge takes immediate action to suspend unsafe food from the market and all the other necessary sanctions and actions shall be applied according to the legislation in force.

In 2010, 2547 consumer complaints were registered and investigated via the free phone line and the electronic form for complaints at the website of SFVS, as well as via other phone lines of the territorial SFVS. Of those complaints, 946 (37%) were recognised as reasonable. In 162 cases other infringements occurred through the fault of the businesses.

To clarify and expand the value of these kinds of feedback systems it may be more accurate and helpful to consider three broad categories:

1. comments: suggestions and ideas about services and service delivery; requests for information;
2. compliments: comments expressing appreciation or acknowledging that something has been done well; and
3. complaints: comments expressing dissatisfaction or informing that something has gone wrong and needs to be put right.

A system that also welcomes and records ‘compliments’ can be highly valuable. It is linked to the idea of being appreciative and finding what is working and why, as well as what is not. Compliments and acknowledgements of efforts can have a positive impact on staff morale and performance, so it is important to consider how these comments can be fed back to staff.

CASE COMPLAINTS AND SUGGESTIONS IN PROVINCIAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION INSPECTORATE IN RZESZÓW (POLAND)

The Provincial Environmental Protection Inspectorate (PEPI) in Rzeszów monitors, on a continuous basis, the trends concerning complaints and suggestions it receives. They believe that the increase in the number of complaints and suggestions received is clearly linked with the higher level of public awareness concerning the hazardous nature of various types of pollution (smog, genetically modified food, odours, etc.). Better access to information is a factor as well. Internet access facilitates the submission of complaints, which may be filed without ever leaving one’s home.

Two types of complaints and suggestions are distinguished at the Rzeszów PEPI: 1) complaints concerning the manner in which a given case has been handled by PEPI staff; 2) complaints/ requests for intervention in relation to activity of business entities and natural persons. The figures per type in relation to the year are as follows:

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Type 1	6	4	5	12
Type 2	322	306	267	285

(Note: 100% of requests under item 2 have been solved with a positive result)

Detailed analysis of the complaints (this applies mainly to type 1) shows that only one out of 12 cases involved improper behaviour of an employee. The majority of such complaints is based on legal regulations that fail to meet the citizens’ expectations.

For example: most claims are concerned with noise (discos, gravel pits, sawmills). The citizens are complaining that the public servants of PEPI, as officials, fail to undertake any efforts, and that once they decide to perform an inspection, they notify the owner (of the disco or sawmill) on beforehand. As a result, the owner turns all the equipment off. PEPI can only answer that they are only applying the provisions of the business freedom act, which requires the owner to be notified 7 days prior to the inspection.

The increased number of complaints was a reason behind the introduction of the special complaint and suggestion handling procedure. Now, each complaint is dealt with by a team of employees under the supervision of an expert not associated with the case but being most competent in the related field. The number and type of complaints and petitions is presented to the PEPI Management during the Quality Management System Review once a year. Conclusions are drawn, corrective measures are implemented and effects are checked the following year. As regards justified complaints, measures are taken immediately.

2011 was the year in which the new systems’ effectiveness was verified by means of a customer satisfaction survey. Only 3 out of 12 answers to complaints have been deemed unsatisfactory. The same complaints are being filed for years, without any new evidence (the same persons living along noisy routes, etc.). In accordance with the amended law, if the complaints fail to present any new evidence, PEPI leaves them unanswered. However, when designing corrective measures, PEPI will try meeting such people, talking to them and giving them answers with the use of “easily understandable language”. Training for civil servants, conducted by a psychologist, on the “language of communication with difficult customers” is found to be very useful. It was a valuable lesson for their staff to learn that the customers are not directing their complaints against them personally, but against “life” and “the law” in general. PEPI’s objective for 2011 is trying to help the customer to cope with the problem and by devoting a few minutes of their genuine attention, in close contact, not from behind the desk.

Appropriate recording and classification enables analysis of the number of complaints and other types of comments and also enables trends or patterns to be monitored. Analysis of outcomes will also be valuable. Once such systems are in place, organisations should be able to gain useful intelligence about particular experiences of service delivery – either service failure or success – which may have wider implications for service design or contain valuable insights into the user experience.

It is important that service users are provided with accessible ways to put forward their feedback and there should also be appropriate access for speakers of other languages, people with disabilities and members of groups that are excluded, hard-to-reach or isolated.

8. Rethink representation

A lot of research and consultation pursues the goal of achieving 'representativeness'. This is often a democratic goal which aims to include a range of people's views. It also has a statistical meaning. The different ideas about representativeness tend to get mixed up and organisations feel that poor response rates undermine the basis of the research findings or that the views of numerically small or dispersed groups of service users are overlooked.
It may be more important to ensure that all service users have opportunities to make their views known through a diversity of approaches, rather than pursuing a goal of strict statistical representativeness that is very difficult to achieve in practice and may not be necessary. The quality and usefulness of research may be enhanced by rethinking what is meant by representativeness in each research context.

The focus of this guidance is to present approaches to gather customer or service user views largely on an individual basis, undertaken within a strategic approach to service user feedback. This is likely to be in addition to or as part of a broader citizen/customer participation strategy. However, the distinction between the two approaches is often blurred. With clear planning and purpose, many methods commonly associated with participation, such as public meetings, workshops and conferences can be used to provide feedback on service quality. There is certainly scope for making better use of existing groups (whether formal organisations or not) for research and consultation purposes, in order to make research and consultation as inclusive as possible. Many methods outlined here can be adapted for use in a more or less participatory way, depending on the broader purposes of the exercise. In this way, how these exercises are conducted may contribute to the quality of life, community regeneration and capacity building goals of organisations.

There are sound reasons for adopting a more participatory approach to research and consultation on service quality. Greater participation draws on a wider pool of knowledge and diversity of experiences. It makes it more difficult to overlook the perhaps small in number, but important group of people, who have some valuable insight and experience that gets lost in the overall statistics.

CASE CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION (ROMANIA)

The National Agency of Civil Servants in collaboration with Agenda 21 - Association Assistance and Programs for Sustainable Development implemented the European Council's model of institutional transparency and participation level evaluation (C.L.E.A.R.) in Romania.

CLEAR is a tool for measuring the level of political participation in various local communities. It is a diagnosis tool, which helps public institutions or other organizations to identify the weaknesses and strengths of participation in their localities. The tool is based on the premises that citizens will participate more efficiently when they:

- Can do – that is, have the resources and knowledge to participate;
- Like to – that is, have a sense of attachment to their community, the level of trust is high;
- are Enabled to – that is, are provided with the opportunity of participation, there are various associative structures of citizens;
- are Asked to – that is, are mobilized by official bodies or voluntary groups;
- are Responded to – that is, see evidence that their views have been considered.

The tool is organized around these five headings, which is completed by the local context of participation, the community's characteristics that can constitute facilitation tools of citizens' involvement. This heading is actually the 0 phase in the diagnosis process. The aim is to offer a certain contextual information on the level of participation in the area and points, to a certain extent, the municipality's / county's initiatives for encouraging an active involvement of citizens.

The CLEAR evaluation process in Romania was different from other CLEAR applications, because it comprised not only an internal evaluation of the institutions, but also an evaluation of the institutions realized by the citizens and the civil society. The project was implemented in the four counties of Romania and in the capital city, Bucharest, and it involved: citizens, civil servants, representatives of NGOs, 18 public institutions from these four counties and Bucharest (city hall, town halls, communalities halls, country councils and prefect's institutions) and the mass-media (around 160.000 persons, direct and indirect beneficiaries).

The evaluation consisted in a report realized by each of the 18 institutions based on a questionnaire including the headings taken into account by the CLEAR tool. Also, a quantitative evaluation was realized, by conducting a questionnaire on the civil servants employed in the target institutions. Altogether, 924 questionnaires were realized.

Another source of information for this report was the evaluation made by civil society. A group of 32 volunteers representing various nongovernmental organizations were trained for being observers within this project; they conducted interviews with citizens from the project's counties based on questionnaires, following the same headings of the CLEAR tool. The chosen sample was one of availability, taking into account criteria of representativeness like age, education level, sex, type of residential locality. Also, the observers realized reports of their observations from the monitoring period.

The monitors interviewed 1080 people and during information campaigns they discussed with approximately 10 000 people. They have acquired skills and knowledge which will allow them to engage over the general interest issues of the community in which they live. Civil servants have become more open to citizens, and by taking into account the evaluated results, they were able to improve its work as well as the activity of the institutions in which they work.

By using methods that engage people directly and draw on the diversity of experience in a collaborative way, greater understanding of different perspectives, needs and expectations can be gleaned. Research and consultation that has greater input from service users themselves may have greater credibility amongst the wider group of service users. In this way, the validity and 'participatory representativeness' of the research process is enhanced.

9. Choosing the right method that is fit for purpose

It may be tempting to use 'off-the-shelf' research packages that produce standardised questionnaires, to use existing surveys produced for an earlier research exercise or to use approaches marketed by contractors. All of these may have a superficial appeal of a readily available methodology. However, they are prescriptive by definition. Off-the-shelf surveys marketed by contractors are unlikely to have a focus on use as they are not designed for use in a specific, local context. Surveys are often designed to provide standardised information to measure comparative performance and change over time and they may be difficult to adapt for other research exercises. For example, it may be difficult to make changes to a questionnaire or to the wording of individual questions and this will reduce the quality and relevance of data collected in this way. As a result, they offer few advantages over a bespoke survey design. This does not mean that organisations cannot learn from the experiences, practical examples and approaches from others. Yet care must be taken with blind copying.

	Identifying potential for concrete improvement	Knowing customer desires and preferences	Representa-tivity	User participation	Price
Customer survey	+/-	+	+	+	--
Mystery shopping	++	-	-	-	+
Focus group	+	++	+/-	+/-	+
Complaint analysis	++	+/-	-	+/-	+
Staff info	+	+	-	-	+/-
Process analysis	+/-	-	-	-	+/-

CASE MEASURING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND (LITHUANIA)

The European Social Fund Agency in Lithuania prepares and performs surveys on the quality of services it provides.

The first measurement of customer satisfaction was performed in 2006. The main aim of the survey was to receive customers' feedback on trainings and seminars organised by the Agency. In the beginning of 2008 the first survey to evaluate the quality of all the services provided by the Agency was performed. Surveys of the same type were performed in the end of 2008 and 2009.

The Agency uses a combination of several tools for measuring customers' satisfaction:

- Once a year, the Agency distributes an e-mail satisfaction survey on the quality of services provided, including the following aspects: quality of the services provided, professionalism, communication and perfection.
- Self completion surveys are distributed after each training and seminar, including the following aspects: is the aim of the training clear; does the information provided during the training correspond to the level of knowledge of the participants; the quality of the presentations, slides, handouts; the competence of speakers; overall organization of the event, etc.
- Web surveys are performed irregularly, approximately twice a year. Usually a short question is asked on the most relevant subject at the time.
- Customer panels are organised once a year since 2008. During these events project promoters (representatives) gather together and share their good and bad practice while administering projects and working with the Agency.
- Group interviews/meetings with the ministries (the Managing Authority and Intermediate Bodies) are organised in order to receive feedback on the quality of the Agency's work and to agree upon the best ways of collaboration. Several meetings have been organised so far.
- A system to gather comments, compliments and complaints is foreseen to be installed at the Agency's Internet site.

The mix of instruments allow the evaluation of the Agency's performance from different time perspectives (e.g. annual surveys and surveys after each training) as well as from different stakeholder perspectives (ministries and project promoters). In addition, the different forms of customer satisfaction measurement (e.g. e-mail survey and customer panels) supplement each other: e-mail surveys enable to enquire large number of project promoters, on the other hand, customer panels enable to discuss particular questions in detail and often to take certain decisions during the session together with the customers.

Based on the results of the evaluations, appropriate actions are foreseen in order to improve particular areas, e.g. in 2010 the Agency's employees prepared a Standard of client service, which was implemented in 2011. Improvements related to the evaluation of the seminars are for example: changing/coaching the lectors, choosing more appropriate places for the subsequent venues, improving the quality of the slides. Actions of higher significance are included in the Agency's action plan.

In choosing the appropriate instrument(s) different elements need to be taken into consideration. If the aim is to get an insight in possible improvement not all the instruments are fit for the purpose. Such instruments only measure the level of satisfaction, but don't give insight in the expectations (demands/preferences). Other element is the representativity (already discussed above). Not all instruments allow active user participation and last but certainly not least is the cost price of the instrument. This table may help organisations in taking a decision on the instrument to use. With the aim of improvement in mind we can conclude that the classical customer surveys not automatically provide insight in concrete improvement areas.

Improvement

Im·pro·ve·ment

/ɪmˈpruːvmənt/

Noun

1. when something gets better or when you make it better

Part 3: Analysing the results

"What are the lessons we draw from the gathered info?"

Collecting data in the right way and asking the right questions are critical steps along the way to successful customer satisfaction measurement. But the research will only be valuable if it delivers insight that can be used as a basis for service transformation. This part of the publication outlines how to use and build on the data you gathered to ensure that it delivers this insight and lessons can be taken for further improvement of the organisation and its service delivery.

1. Who thinks what?

As highlighted earlier in the chapter, it is worth considering what segmentations are in use within the organisation before starting customer satisfaction measurement. Segmentation is also relevant when it comes to the analysis of the results.
Knowing that the views, experiences and satisfaction levels of one sub-group of customers differ from those of another enables organisations to start formulating a targeted plan of action to improve their services. At a simple level, this analysis might be based on a breakdown of the results by information about customers such as their age, sex, service or channel usage, etc., which has either been collected in the survey or is available on the customer database used to select the survey sample.

Some organisations use pre-defined customer segments to identify differences between customer groups, which can inform how service improvements should be tailored to meet the diverse needs of these groups. These segmentation models might be based on socio-demographic characteristics or more sophisticated classification systems, which go beyond basic socio-demographics to classify people by their lifestyles, culture and consumer behaviour, based on where they live. While these techniques are more widely used in the private sector, they are gaining credence in local and central government.

The term 'segmentation' is also used to describe the statistical technique called 'cluster analysis'. This approach is commonly used to inform communications strategies, but can also be a useful tool in customer satisfaction measurement to generate insights about different groups of customers.

Existing segmentations may also be used to learn the key issues for individual customer segments. This can be useful for targeting actions on specific problem areas which may not be obvious from the high level results. The data from customer satisfaction research can also be used to define a segmentation which identifies different types of customer by their attitudes towards the service or their needs (e.g. efficiency, relationship, advice). However, great care should always be taken before undertaking segmentation analysis to ensure that it will complement whatever segmentations are already in use within the organisation and will not lead to duplication or confusion. Both forms of segmentation can be used in conjunction with key drivers analysis (see infra) to help identify actions to improve services for specific groups.

CASE SEGMENTATION IN THE ROAD ADMINISTRATION (SWEDEN)

Since 2000, the Swedish Road Administration has systematically captured and analysed the needs of the customers, individuals and business community, who use the Swedish transport system.
To manage this work (mainly for internal use in the organisation) they have decided to divide the customers in two groups: individuals and business community. The groups of individuals are also divided into subgroups:

- Children 0-17 year
- Youths 18-24 years
- Professionals
- Senior citizens
- Disabled people

Segmentation in the public sector is a topic in its own right. However, this section would be incomplete without a word on the subject. Often widely misunderstood, segmentation is a powerful tool that can help managers and workers throughout an organisation to visualise their customers and to identify groups of customers who have common needs.

Government Communications Network's *Engage* Programme[4] defines customer segmentation as: "Subdividing a target audience into homogeneous and reachable groups based on shared needs and characteristics such as:

- who they are (socio-demographics)
- what they do (their behaviour)
- how they think and feel (their attitudes and needs)".

Segmentation can be used as a strategic or operational tool. How you define your segmentation will depend on the objective you are trying to achieve. If applied well, it can give an organisation a common framework and language to talk about customers in the context of strategies and plans.
By considering how each segment will be best served, the organisation begins to take a customer-based approach to strategy, rather than a service or product-based approach. This

[4] http://engage.comms.gov.uk/

approach can pay dividends not only in more satisfied and engaged customers, but also in greater levels of efficiency.

The following is a useful checklist for successful segmentation:

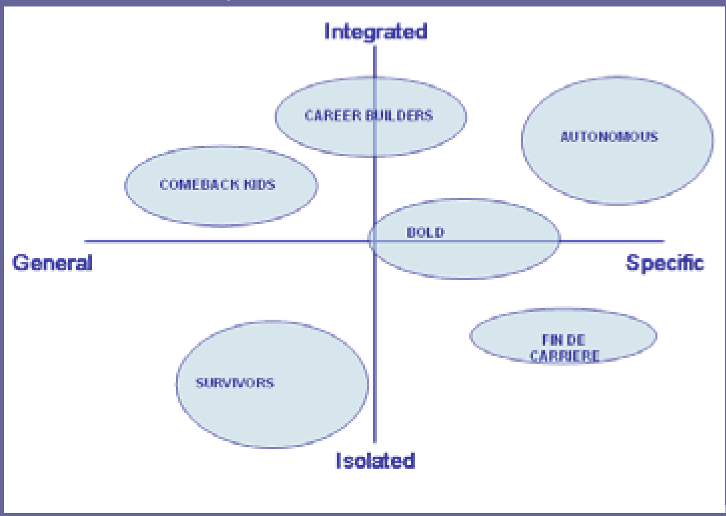
- Accountability: Plan how the segmentation will be used – by whom and for what – up front so it's relevant
- Leverage: Use existing knowledge and data first to help design a segmentation questionnaire
- Ownership: Have it owned by the department and stakeholders
- Deployment: Present segments in a way that captures the imagination

The resulting segmentation scheme should be actionable. This means segments that are measurable, identifiable and definable, that can be reached via delivery, media and communications channels and that are substantial enough to be worth targeting separately. The scheme should also recognise that customers' needs, preferences and attitudes change and no segmentation scheme should remain unchanged for long, but should be updated accordingly.

As this publication has set out, government needs to serve the whole community and cannot personalise for everyone, but nor should we offer a single uniform service. Segmentation provides a cost-effective solution and helps us to understand how best to allocate resources. At the end of the day though, the success of any customer segmentation scheme will depend on the organisations' ability to describe the needs of customers with great vividness. Therefore, no scheme should be over-complex.

CASE SEGMENTATION IN THE FLEMISH EMPLOYMENT SERVICE (BELGIUM)

The Flemish employment service is guiding job seekers (back) to work. For a long time they worked with classical segmentation techniques (age, educational background,…) to define the services to provide to different target groups. For some years they have started with a new kind of segmentation based on the needs and personal characteristics of job seekers. This is how it came to a typology of characteristics of people in looking for a new job (people who need a very personal approach and coaching, people who only need to have an additional short guidance, people who need extra re-education, etc.. Based upon the typology the service delivery process was adapted and resources (staff, time, money for education) were reorganised and used in a more efficient and effective way.



2. What is driving satisfaction and how?

As discussed in the previous part, just measuring satisfaction is not sufficient to inform service transformation – it tells an organisation how it is doing, but not why it is performing as it is. In addition, it is important to understand the influence of different factors on the customer's experience and how they interact with each other. In order to produce actionable insights, it is also critical to explore these factors in more depth, and to understand how they could be changed in order to improve customer service.

2.1. Dimensions and determinants of service quality and satisfaction

As with the models for measuring satisfaction and identifying priorities outlined above, there are also a number of different constructions of the service factors that are most important in influencing perceptions of the service. We start with the factors that inform the SERVQUAL approach, before looking at refinements and alternative approaches.

A. Determinants of quality in Servqual

Service quality literature usually attempts to categorise the factors that influence attitudes towards the service at a number of different levels. At the highest level this involves a small number of service quality *dimensions.* These can be disaggregated into a larger set of service quality *factors or determinants*, which are then developed into questions for measuring through a structured questionnaire.

In the original concept of the Servqual instrument, 10 determinants of service quality were described. We present them and give examples.[5]

Determinants of service quality	*Examples*
Access The ease and convenience of accessing the service	Neighbourhood offices; one stop shops; convenient operating hours; 24 hour telephone; internet access
Communication Keeping customers informed in a language they understand; listening to customers	Plain language pamphlets and brochures; communication material tailored to the needs of individual groups (ethnic minorities, visually impaired etc.); suggestions and complaints systems
Competence Having the skills and knowledge to provide the service	All staff knowing, and being able to do their job
Courtesy Politeness, respect, consideration, friendliness of staff at all levels	Staff behaving politely and pleasantly
Credibility Trustworthiness, reputation and image	The reputation of the service in the wider community; staff generating a feeling of trust with customers
Reliability Providing consistent, accurate and dependable service; delivering the service that was promised	Standards defined in local service charters; accuracy of records; accuracy of community charge bills; doing jobs right in the first time; keeping promises and deadlines
Responsiveness Being willing and ready to provide service when needed	Resolving problems quickly; providing appointment times
Security	Providing services in a safe and secure manner

[5] Accounts Commission for Scotland (1999), *Can't Get No Satisfaction: Using a gap approach to measure service*, p.32

Physical safety; financial security; confidentiality	
Tangibles The physical aspects of the service such as equipment, facilities, staff appearance	Up-to-date equipment and facilities; staff uniforms
Understanding the customer Knowing individual customer needs; recognising the repeat customer	Tailoring services where practical to meet individual needs

There has been a great deal of discussion on the comprehensiveness and appropriateness of these dimensions for different services. One particular addition is worth noting: the dimension of recovery (how services deal with putting things right when they have gone wrong). This is widely seen to be a particular gap in the list, and has since been added to a number of approaches.

B. Other dimensions and determinants

As noted above, service quality dimensions and factors have been researched widely for a range of public and private services – and just about all individual studies include some amendments or additions to reflect the particular service being researched. There is therefore little to be gained by attempting to summarise a comprehensive approach here. However, it is worth outlining a list of 18 quality determinants compiled by Johnston (1995), based on a study in the banking sector that is often seen to be more helpful and comprehensive than the SERVQUAL list:[6]

- *Access:* the physical approachability of service location, including the ease of finding one's way around the service environment and the clarity of route.
- *Aesthetics:* extent to which the components of the service package are agreeable or pleasing to the customer, including both the appearance and the ambience of the service environment, the appearance and presentation of service facilities, goods and staff.
- *Attentiveness/helpfulness:* the extent to which the service, particularly of contact staff, either provides help to the customer or gives the impression of interest in the customer and shows a willingness to serve.
- *Availability:* the availability of service facilities, staff and goods to the customer. In the case of contact staff, this means both the staff/customer ratio and the amount of time available for each staff member to spend with each customer. In the case of goods, availability includes both the quantity and the range of products made available to the customer.
- *Care:* the concern, consideration, sympathy and patience shown to the customer. This includes the extent to which the customer is put at ease by the service and made to feel emotionally (rather than physically) comfortable.
- *Cleanliness/tidiness:* cleanliness, and the neat and tidy appearance of the tangible components of the service package, including the service environment, facilities, goods and contact staff.
- *Comfort:* the physical comfort of the service environment and facilities.
- *Commitment:* staff's apparent commitment to their work, including the pride and satisfaction they apparently take in their job, their diligence and thoroughness.

[6] Johnston, R. (1995), *The determinants of service quality: satisfiers and dissatisfiers,* International Journal of Bank Marketing, Vol. 15 n. 4, pp.111-116.

- *Communication:* the ability of the service providers to communicate with the customer in a way he or she will understand. This includes the clarity, completeness and accuracy of both verbal and written information communicated to the customer and the ability of staff to listen to and understand the customer.
- *Competence:* the skill, expertise and professionalism with which the service is executed. This includes the carrying out of correct procedures, correct execution of customer instructions, degree of product or service knowledge exhibited by contact staff, the rendering of good, sound advice and the general ability to do a good job.

CASE THE REGION OF CENTRAL MACEDONIA (GREECE)

The Region of Central Macedonia (RCM) investigated Citizen Satisfaction at two of its specific departments (Agricultural Development Directorate and Thessaloniki Forestry Inspectorate), by implementing the SERVQUAL method for the first time. In that way, RCM laid the foundations for measuring the quality of the services that it provided. The implementation of the SERVQUAL method provides a detailed image of the perspective by the citizens regarding the quality of the services that they receive and is the first step in the improvement procedure. The introduction of improvement activities by management can now be justified and can target specific operating areas at each department.

RCM will be in a position, through the implementation of SERVQUAL, to investigate the gap between the expectations and the perceptions of the customers–users for the quality of its provided services. A negative gap in a certain area may potentially be an indication of a deeper problem that is lurking, which must be investigated. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that its implementation must be combined with an essential interpretation and correspondence to the five areas of quality under the conditions and the context of the procedures for the provision of services being investigated. The discovery of the causes of the negative gaps and consequently the configuration of the suitable improvement measures may be supported by the suitable adjustment of the questions, something that may be taken into consideration and dealt with in subsequent applications of the tool. Nevertheless, in each case where statistically significant gaps are located between the expectations and perceptions, these must constitute a starting point and not a conclusion in the effort to improve the quality of the services at the RCM.

It must finally be stressed that the tool’s effectiveness is reinforced when its implementation is repeated at regular intervals, and naturally after the implementation of changes that have been decided upon for achieving improvements. In this way there can be periodical comparisons to locate the influences exercised by the changes on the perceptions and expectations of the customers–users, which is considered to be exceptionally significant in any reorganisation and improvement procedure.

- *Courtesy:* the politeness, respect and propriety shown by the service, usually contact staff, in dealing with the customer and his or her property. This includes the ability of staff to be unobtrusive and non-interfering when appropriate.
- *Flexibility:* a willingness and ability on the part of the service worker to amend or alter the nature of the service or product to meet the needs of the customer.
- *Friendliness:* the warmth and personal approachability (rather than physical approachability) of the service providers, particularly of contact staff, including cheerful attitude and the ability to make the customer feel welcome.
- *Functionality:* the serviceability and fitness for purpose or “product quality” of service facilities and goods.
- *Integrity:* the honesty, justice, fairness and trust with which customers are treated by the service organisation.
- *Reliability:* the reliability and consistency of performance of service facilities, goods and staff. This includes punctual service delivery and an ability to keep to agreements made with the customer.

- *Responsiveness:* speed and timeliness of service delivery. This includes the speed of throughput and the ability of the service providers to respond promptly to customer requests, with minimal waiting and queuing time.
- *Security:* personal safety of the customer and his or her possessions while participating in or benefiting from the service process. This includes the maintenance of confidentiality.

CASE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION METHODOLOGY FOR ONLINE AND OFF LINE SERVICES (ITALY)

The Italian Department of Public Administration developed an easy to use and acknowledged model for implementing customer satisfaction surveys and analysis on both online and offline public services.

An experimental phase was carried out over an eighteen months period (beginning 2009-July 2010) and aimed at allowing and testing the final release of the model. The pilot activity involved a pilot-group of Italian public administrations. A comprehensive review of national and international literature was conducted together with Customer satisfaction surveys on previously selected services (on-line and off-line). After the experimental phase the model guidelines were published and are now available for all the central and local public administrations on the PAQ portal (www.qualtapa.gov.it). The integrated (on-line and off-line services) gives to the administrations the opportunity of using simple tools which, at the same time, guarantee comparison and benchmarking.
The tools used for the survey are:

- a questionnaire containing 22 items featured in 7 dimensions: Accessibility; Adequacy of information; Response capacity; Site design; Management of the contact with the user; Improving the relationship between the public administration and citizens; Security. For example:

ACCESSIBILITY
Ease of access to the site and online services provided
It is easy to get to the site It is easy to access the services on the site It is easy to register in order to be able to use the services on the site

- 3 Emoticons, in order to obtain a "friendly" layout and a positive interaction with respondents.

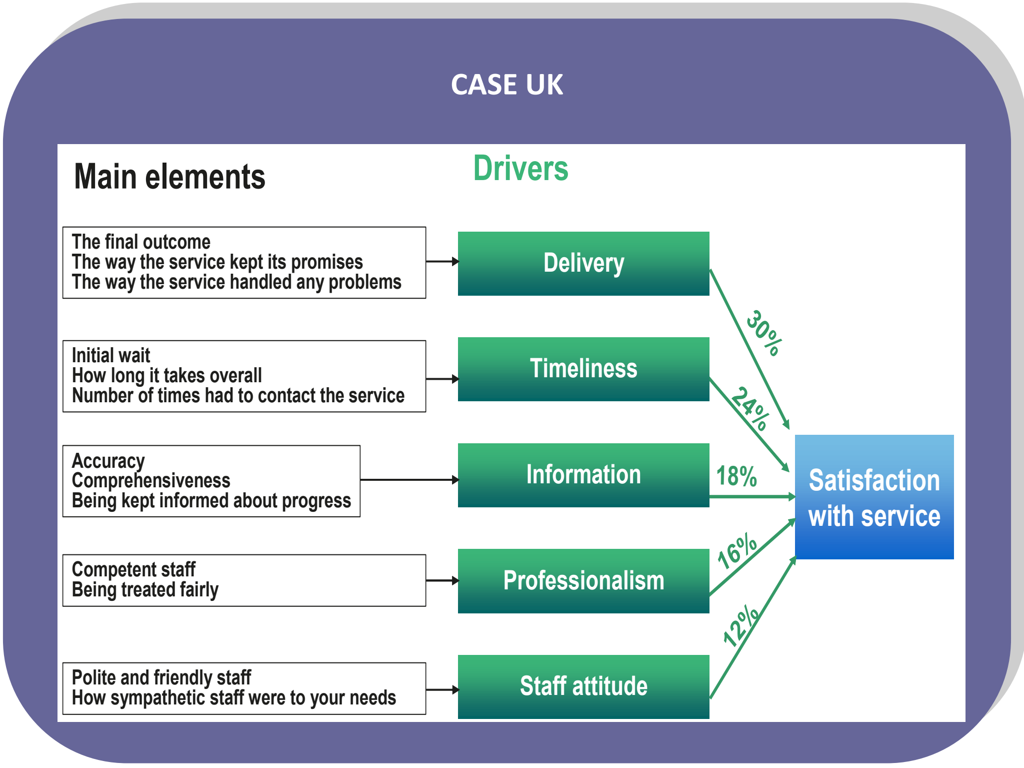
the questionnaire has two different and alternative applications both for online and offline services:

a) One version is standard and generally applicable for evaluating the whole supply of services provided by any administration.
b) The same survey could be also applicable for evaluating a specific public service provided by an administration. In this second case, 6 out 7 dimensions remain stable, while the dimension "response capacity" can be customized, case by case, according with the specificities of each service assessed.

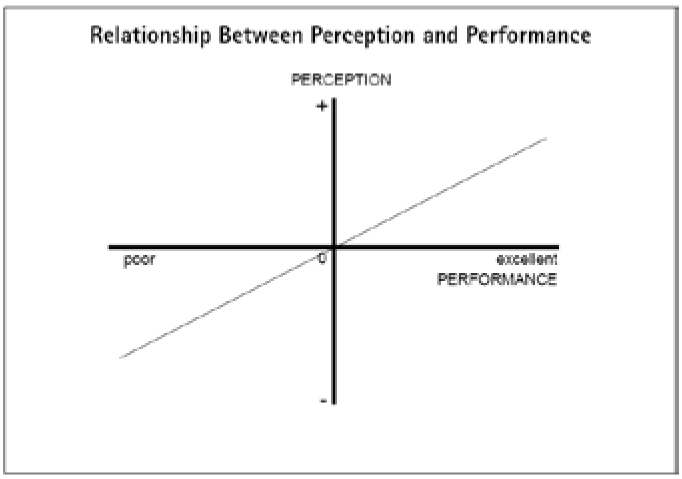
The sample is casually selected between the population of users, in a defined temporal window (usually one month).
Following the field part of the survey, the collected data are studied in a detailed report. This report is aimed at both showing the results according to a descriptive approach and illustrating more complex analysis, using inferential statistics techniques (correlations, regressions, etc.). The main aim of the reports is to create evidence-based conditions for supporting the administrations in developing improvement actions.
The results produced by the model allow measuring the satisfaction degree according to a variety of aspects and, starting from such measures, to launch optimization initiatives on the services provision processes. In fact, the way to manage the process (operating levers) influences the performance results (results of the process) that positively or negatively influence the customer satisfaction results. The standardisation of the set of items and dimensions guarantees the possibility to compare information in time and space whereas the priorities can be identified through a further measure, namely the Importance attributed by the interviewees to each service dimension.

2.2. Key driver analysis[7]

Depending on the level of detail gained from a survey, the list of factors that are likely to contribute to satisfaction can be quite long. However, it is possible to identify which factors have the biggest impact and use this information to target resources effectively. In quantitative customer satisfaction measurement this is usually done using a statistical technique called multiple regression, which is also commonly known as *key driver analysis.*



Key driver analysis produces a list of factors that influence satisfaction and an idea of how important each factor is. Results from key driver analysis can be presented in very user-friendly formats to help communicate findings and drive action across the whole organisation.



As mentioned previously, the aim of key drivers analysis is to define the most important drivers of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a service in order to identify the areas in which changes to the service will have the greatest impact on the customer experience. At a high level there are key drivers in common across many public services. However, it is at the detailed level that the most valuable insights are likely to emerge for individual service providers. Importantly, key drivers analysis can help distinguish what people say influences how satisfied they are, form the key points in the customer experience which really have an

[7] Based on Johnston, R. and Heineke, J. (1998), Exploring the Relationship Between Perceptions and Performance: Priorities for Action, *The Services Industries Journal*, Vol. 18, Nº 1 (January), pp. 101-112.

impact. Customer satisfaction measurement provides an organisation with overall numerical 'scores' for the levels of (dis)satisfaction that customers are experiencing with different areas of service delivery.

Key drivers analysis provides a deeper level of quantitative insight. This allows each driver to be isolated and evaluated according to the size of its impact on overall satisfaction. In some cases, sub-drivers can also be isolated and evaluated and their relative elasticities measured. At the same time of identifying priorities for action, key drivers analysis also allows an organisation to understand what they can't control, and the extent to which perception (via the media or word of mouth) is shaping peoples' reported satisfaction levels. This is important from a strategic point of view and needs to be taken into account when setting objectives for service improvement.

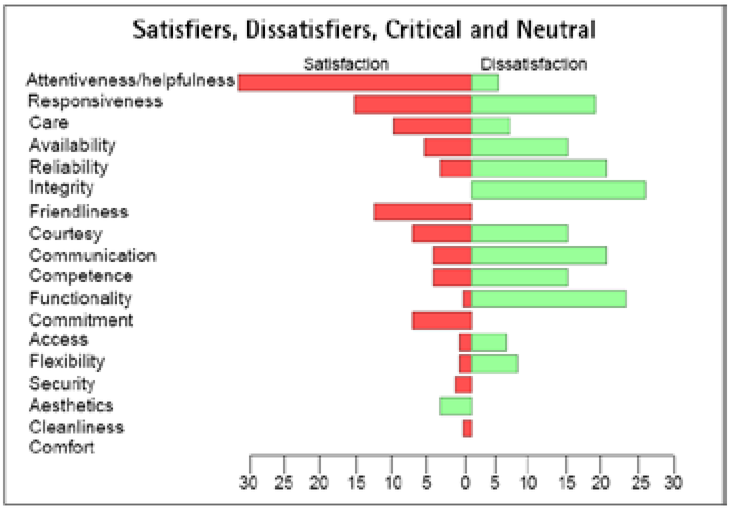
When identifying priorities, it is also useful to consider in more detail how changes in performance on individual factors may impact on perceptions. Early models infer a simple linear relationship between performance and perception, where any increase in performance (on any of the factors identified) leads to an increase in perceptions of service quality and vice versa (Johnston and Heineke, 1998). The chart illustrates this interdependence.

However, this is clearly too simplistic, and a number of researchers suggest we should split factors into different types according to the nature of their impact. There are two main theories about how impacts vary (Johnston and Heineke, 1998).

A. Type of quality factors

Quality factors have been split into four main categories:

- *Dissatisfiers (or hygiene factors):* these can be thought of as existing at two levels: inadequate and adequate. If such factors are perceived to be inadequate, then dissatisfaction will result; but any increase in performance above adequacy has little effect on perceptions. The example often given is of a fork in a restaurant with a small amount of food on it; the presence of a dirty fork is likely to make customers dissatisfied, but a very clean fork is unlikely to add to satisfaction.



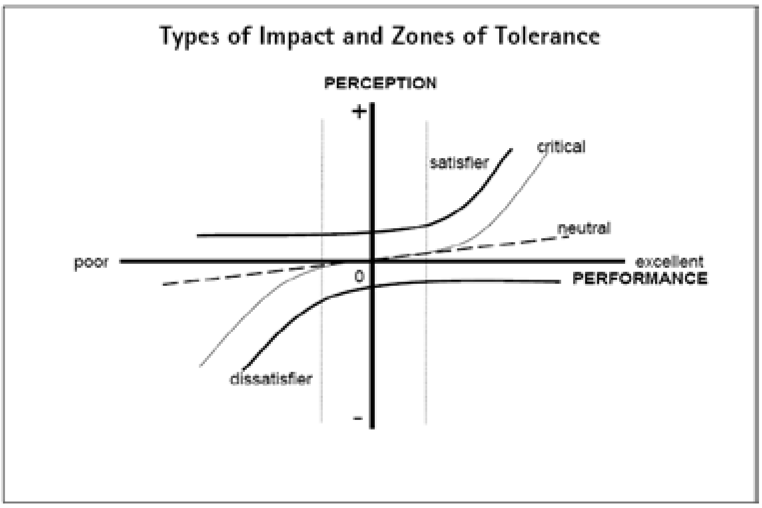
- *Satisfiers (or excellence factors):* those factors which, when improved beyond adequacy, have a positive effect on perceptions. However, when these factors are either not in evidence or poorly performed, they do not detract from impressions of service quality. The example given is that if a waiter does not remember you from your last visit in the restaurant you are unlikely to be dissatisfied, but if he does and also remembers your favourite wine, you are likely to be delighted.

- *Critical (or dual threshold factors):* these are factors that can be both satisfying and dissatisfying. For example, responsiveness is often seen as a critical factor; a speedy service from your waiter can delight, but a slow service can lead to dissatisfaction.
- *Neutral/Basic:* these are least sensitive to changes in performance.

The chart, from the above-mentioned Johnston's study in the banking sector, illustrates how factors can be classified according to their impact. This shows the classification of responses from a Critical Incident Technique (CIT) study, where anecdotes from service users on particularly satisfying or dissatisfying service experiences are coded into the key determinant list. Attentiveness is clearly a satisfying factor, being mainly highlighted in incidents that have been particularly satisfying for respondents. On the other hand, integrity seems to be a clear dissatisfying factor. Responsiveness is a critical factor (as reflected in a number of other studies), while comfort is a neutral factor, not mentioned in any anecdotes.

B. Sensitivity of factors

This still suggests a linear relationship between performance and perceptions, where improvement in each of the factors may impact on perceptions in different ways, but to the same extent in all circumstances. However, more recent work has shown that this is not the case.



In particular, it has been noted that customers are willing to absorb some positive or negative disconfirmation of expectations before expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Other researchers suggest a similar model, but the reason is that the customer does not notice these relatively small differences. Irrespective of the reason, this model suggests there is a "zone of tolerance" where changes in service provision have little impact on the perceptions of the service, as seen in the diagram.

The model suggests that once outside the zone of tolerance there could be a disproportionate impact on perceptions – that relatively small changes in performance could have a large impact on how the service is perceived. The nature and size of the zone of tolerance is therefore clearly important to attempt to understand.

The French case is perfectly illustrating this approach.

Improving service quality implies listening to users and carrying out satisfaction surveys. But what should be done with the findings? What does a 70 or 80% satisfaction rate actually mean? How do we move from measuring satisfaction to establishing a proper action plan? How do we know what to start with and what will have the largest impact? These questions are becoming even more important in a context of economic crisis and budgetary restrictions.

After a satisfaction survey, secondary statistical analyses can be used to go beyond a simple assessment of what was rated highly and what poorly. Satisfaction is not a linear phenomenon, and the factors assessed (waiting periods, staff helpfulness, information, etc.) contribute to satisfaction in various degrees depending on whether they are basic, key, excellence or secondary factors.

The General Directorate for State Modernization (DGME) has led a large-scale study to quantify user satisfaction with public services following twenty major life events (marriage, birth, job loss, retirement, etc.). In this study our goal is:

1) to know whether it is possible to measure the satisfaction of users on a life event perimeter (in a life event like losing one's job or getting married for example, people have contact with several administrations and not only one). This life event approach leads us to add new determinants of quality service which particularly highlights the hardships of users before they contact an administration and especially when a multiplicity of administrations are involved in a service delivery (identify the relevant office to contact, consistency among sources of information);
2) to know whether the drivers of satisfaction were generic or, on the contrary, specific to each life event;
3) to highlight the drivers of satisfaction in each life event and provide them to the different ministries in order to help them to re-think their action plan by asking themselves: are we dealing with the factors which will have the largest impact on the users satisfaction?

	Number of interviews
I am ageing/ losing my independence	327
I have lost my job	396
getting ready for retirement	405
I am renting a house	293
I am a home-owner (building/buying a house)	275
I am doing university level studies (higher education)	370
My child is starting school	604
I am choosing my study options (a path)	1241
I am applying for ID papers	308
I am taking care of my health - Hospital	316
I am taking care of my health - Insurance claims	414
I am filing a tax return and paying my taxes	659
I own a vehicle	418
I am the victim of a crime	311
I am moving / I am changing my Coordinates	324
One of my close relative is dead	272
I am getting married/entering into a civil union/living with someone	301
I am having a baby	310
I am disabled	324
I protect the environment	295

At the request of the DGME, a polling institute questioned public service users based on a sample of 9,504 interviews and representative of French residents aged 15 and older.

The survey was conducted into two parts, between June and December 2010. Interviews were conducted by phone.

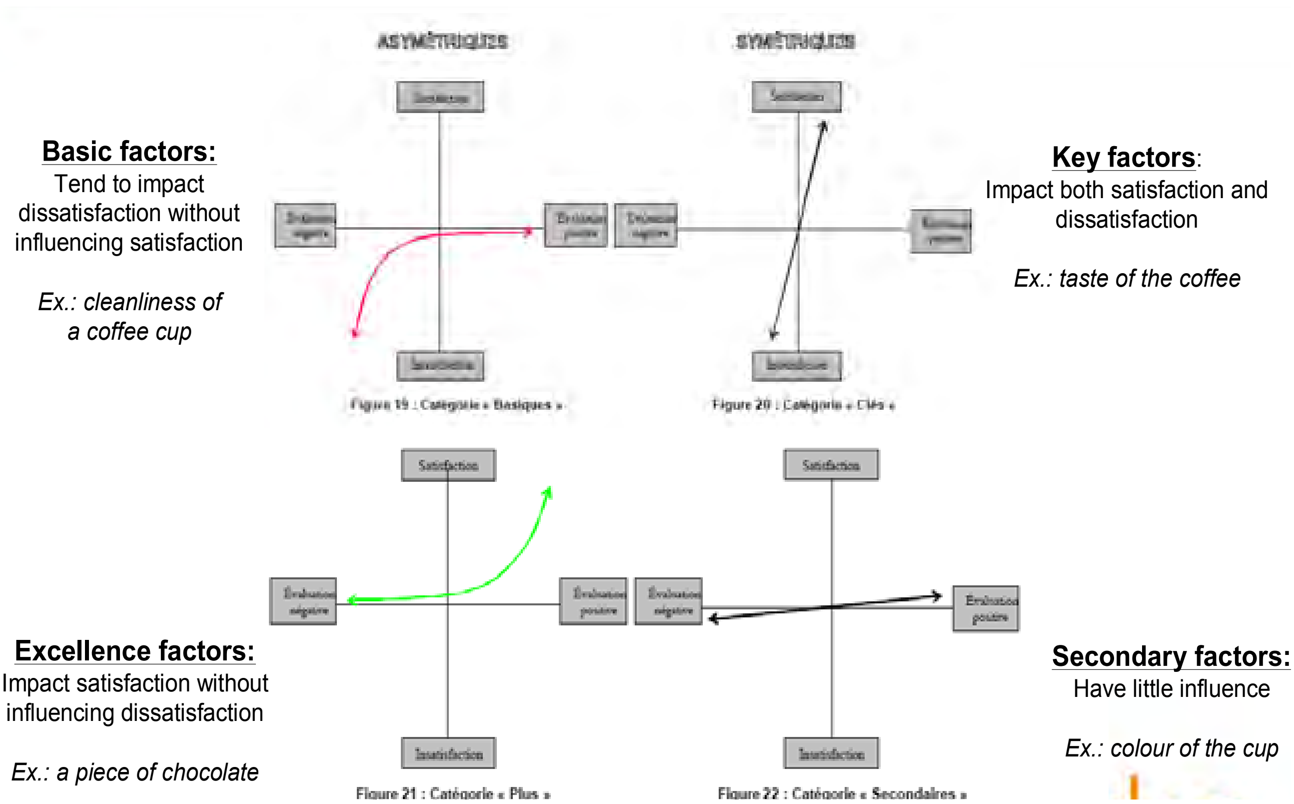
The representative nature of the sample was ensured by using the quota method and factoring in gender, age, and profession of the head of the family, with stratification by region and metropolitan area category.

The list of criteria/ determinant of satisfaction has been limited to nearly twenty four practical reasons. They are classified into three parts according to the user journey (information, then reception then service delivery) in order to make it easier to understand for the interviewees.

Preliminary information	Preliminary guidance	*Was it easy to identify the services to contact?*
	Personalized information	*Could you get information corresponding to your personal case?*
	Consistency of information	*Consistency among the different sources of information you consulted*
	Information about steps to take	*Clear information about steps to take*
	Reliability of document lists	*Accuracy of the list of documents to provide*
reception	Waiting time	*Wait time or time until you were in contact with an appropriate authority*
	Information about processing time	*Information about how long it would take for your request to be answered*
	Opening hours	*Opening hours*
	Guidance	*Direction to the appropriate contact*
	Registration of request	*Confidence that your request was being taken into consideration*
Service delivery	Trust in applicant	*Confidence your contact showed in your statements*
	Employees' courtesy	*Friendliness of your contact(s)*
	Follow-up	*Information on progress of your request*
	Access (travel/phone)	*How often did you have to come in or phone?*
	Processing time	*How long until your request was answered*
	Involvement of the employees	*Involvement of your contact (or the service) in your case*
	Employees competence	*Competence of your contact(s)*
	Proactivity	*Did the service take the initiative in offering you useful services or solutions?*

This list does not aspire to be exhaustive but it summarizes the main dimensions gathered by our qualitative studies. The criteria about reception and service delivery are quite classical: wasted time, time processing and communication about the processing time, follow up and staff professionalism and behaviour.

The life event approach has highlighted other very important determinants linked to the preliminary information phase especially when a multiplicity of administrations are involved (ease in identifying the relevant office to contact or consistency among sources of information, etc.).



Beyond the performance of each factor, rated highly or poorly, statistical analysis help to determine its importance (statistical correlation) with the overall satisfaction and the way it contributes to this satisfaction. Satisfaction is not a linear phenomenon, and the factors assessed (waiting periods, staff helpfulness, information, etc.) contribute to satisfaction in various degrees depending on whether they are basic, key, excellence or secondary factors.

To illustrate the specific influence of the various criteria of the general satisfaction, let us take as an example an individual who asks for a coffee:

- *Basic factors*: If his/her coffee is served in a dirty cup, he or she will be dissatisfied. However, he/she will not be more satisfied if the coffee is served in a clean cup because he/she expects to a "minimal" service. So the cleanliness of the cup is a basic factor in its contribution to the general satisfaction.
- *Key factors*: If the coffee is tasty, it will increase the individual's satisfaction. If it is not, it will create some dissatisfaction. As a consequence, the taste of the coffee is a key factor which has both an impact on the individual's satisfaction and dissatisfaction.
- *Excellence Factors*: If the coffee is served with an almond, it will have a positive impact on the individual's perception since he/she does not expect it. So his/her satisfaction will increase. The absence of the almond does not modify the impression felt about the quality of the served coffee. Here, the almond is an excellence factor: its presence is well received, its absence does not impact on the satisfaction.
- *Secondary factors*: Finally, whatever the colour of the cup in which the coffee is served, the impact on the satisfaction is neutral. Consequently, the colour of the cup is less sensitive to the variations in term of performance.

These asymmetrical statistical analyses have been conducted for each life event and they reveal that the drivers of satisfaction are specific for each life event.

When someone is preparing his/her retirement the wasted time to join the administration generates dissatisfaction more than satisfaction (basic factor). His/her satisfaction is strongly linked with the ability of the administration to give him/her good information (personalized, coherent and proactive) The processing time and the staff professionalism are factors of excellence which means that a majority of people don't blame the administration for a long processing time when they are preparing their

EXAMPLE: FRENCH STUDY ON DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION

"Getting ready for retirement"	"I have lost my job"
Basic factors	
Time lost (number of trips or phone calls, wasting time)	**Staff involvement / Proactiveness** **Information**
Key factors	
Information Proactiveness Ease in identifying services to contact	**Staff attitude**(friendliness)**/** **Staff competence** **Processing time**
Excellence factors	
Processing time **Staff competence /Staff involvement**	**Time lost**
Secondary factors	
Staff attitude (friendliness) **Opening hours**	

retirement (they need to be well-informed above all). When someone has just lost his/her job, the processing time is much more important (key factor) as well as the staff competence and attitude. Their involvement, and proactiveness are even considered as basic factors.

The time spent to join the administration is in this life event a factor of excellence. This example illustrates that beyond the same rate of unsatisfied users (29% for retirement and 35% for job loss about the waiting time) the action to take is different according to the type of factors: the waiting time is considered as a basic factor in the case of retirement so it needs to be dealt with very urgently whereas it is a factor of excellence for people who has lost their job so that they have other priorities.

Conclusions: Important cross-cutting elements in analysing what drives satisfaction for life events as a whole. Drivers of satisfaction are specific to each life event. Nevertheless, certain cross-cutting elements can be identified:

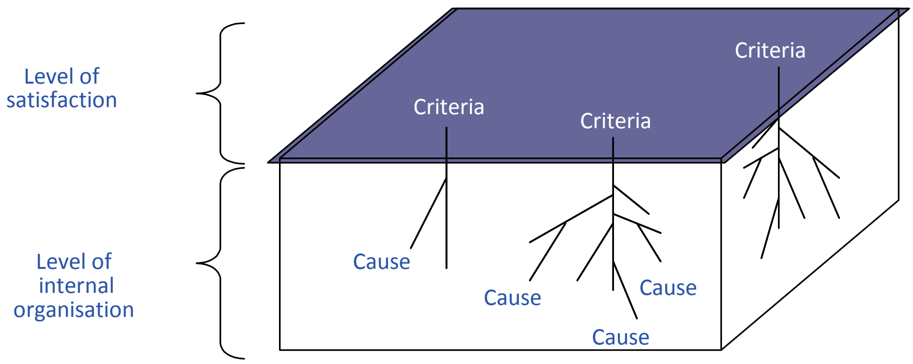
- The time-consuming aspect of administrative procedures (visits / waiting time / opening hours) are highly unsatisfying elements and tend to be ranked as basic.
- Processing time is often a key element, but less often than simply communicating the processing time.
- The staff attitude and competence (trust in the user, personal involvement and skill) are performance elements and are often generators of excellence.
- Contrary to what one might think, proactiveness is not an excellence element but rather tends to be a key factor.

Working with the life event approach is really helpful because it reveals troubles that people have when there are several administrations involved in the delivery of a service. It helps to make different administrations work together, giving them a macro view and the main orientations. But on the other hand it is not a really day to day tool to work with.

3. Building in other sources of insight

Analysing headline data and the experiences of different customers can provide useful information, and key driver analysis can identify the priorities for improvement. However, on its own this information will not necessarily be enough to inform service transformation. It is important to build in other sources of insight and not to treat the survey findings in isolation. Information that is available, such as administrative data, or information from customer-facing staff (see part 2), can be used to provide useful context when interpreting the results.

Carrying out qualitative research after the survey can be an extremely valuable way to explore further the key drivers of satisfaction and inform service improvement



plans. For example, you may find that a major driver of dissatisfaction is the difficulty of filling in a form, but there is unlikely to be time in the survey to explore exactly what it is about the form that is difficult. Without this information, you cannot plan improvements. Carrying out follow up qualitative interviews with customers who reported problems in the survey, or for that matter those who were highly satisfied with the service is an effective approach, because you can target the follow up interviews according to particular areas of satisfaction or dissatisfaction that you want to explore.

CASE ROOT CAUSES (LUXEMBOURG)

In a case of a family allowance administration, the level of satisfaction identified a problem of waiting time (long lines at the counter). Different root causes were identified and the administration focused the improvement actions on a direct contact with the request manager. After the implementation of this action in a pilot team, the final delay of treatment was reduced and satisfaction increased.

Another action was to systematically reply to all incoming mails. The systematic reply avoided that customers had to come to the administration's offices; the lines at the counter were reduced again.

Concerning the choice of improvement actions after the measurement phase, and in order to guarantee that these actions have the most important improvement effect, the methodology foresees to use a method which is based on the theory of constraints. The principle is to make a difference between the causes and the effects.

4. Driving the findings through the organisation

The analysis and interpretation of customer satisfaction measurement should always be driven by the needs of stakeholders and the objective of delivering strategic and operational change. This means that those responsible for measurement need to think about how they will address the needs of each of these audiences: the level of detail, the form of communication and the frequency of information they require.

CASE SATISFACTION MEASUREMENT IN THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE (HUNGARY)

The Hungarian National Employment Service promotes employment growth, makes the unemployed employable, and tries to shortens the time spent without a job. The Employment Service is organised at three levels: 170 local offices (organisational level), 7 regional centres (level of coordination) and the national (strategic) level. Half of the local offices and all the regional centres have implemented *partner-oriented quality management programmes*.

The service takes into account 3 groups of its stakeholders when measuring the partner satisfaction: (a) the employees (staff) of the Service, (b) the employers, (c) the clients (mostly unemployed/job seeker people). The satisfaction is measured through self-completion surveys, and indicated by the overall Partner Satisfaction Index (P), which is composed of the employee (30%), employer (30%), annual client (30%) and quarterly client (10%) survey indices.

The annual schedule of satisfaction measurement (as of 2010)

February: Quarterly smiley (client) survey 1	**September:** Quarterly smiley (client) survey 3
March: Annual client survey	**September/October:** CAF self-assessment
April: Employer survey	**November:** Quarterly smiley (client) survey 4
April: Employee survey	**December:** Assessment of the overall 'P index'
May: Quarterly smiley (client) survey 2	

The client survey counts more than 300.000 respondents per year. The survey requests data in order to subdivide the respondents according to their gender, age, education and case type. The employer survey subdivides according to size and sector. The data gained from the measurement are being assessed on three levels: local offices (organisational level), regional centres (level of coordination) and national (strategic) level. Due to the common methodology, the different offices become comparable (see infra part 5 for more information on the benchmarking activities of the Hungarian National Employment Service).

The results are communicated in various ways. The employees attend dedicated assessment sessions with the presence of the leadership. The clients can get to know the results of the surveys in the waiting halls of the offices (on the so-called "quality walls"). Employers receive newsletters periodically.

The assessments are translated into initiatives and incorporated into action plans on each level. The organisational quality management plans are being prepared by the so-called quality development circles and adopted by the leadership. Upon the plans, the leader implements the initiatives (correction plans, regulations, orders, rules of procedure). At the end of the year (PDCA cycle) the leader assesses whether the objectives have been reached or not, building in the experiences to the next year's action plan.

Citizen

Ci·ti·zen

/ˈsɪtɪz(ə)n/

Noun

1. a person who is a member of a particular country and who has rights because of being born there or because of being given rights, or a person who lives in a particular town or city

Part 4: Taking action

"Setting up the improvements"

Once key drivers have been identified they can be used to assess the potential for service improvement. At the beginning of the process the focus is often on the drivers of dissatisfaction, and in reducing this to an acceptable level. However, for many organisations there is also increasing interest in understanding the experience of those who appear to have no strong views, the 'fairly satisfied' who can often account for about 40% of respondents, but who are still likely to be experiencing problems in some areas of the service. These problems need to be understood if the benefits from customer satisfaction measurement are to be maximised.

1. The nature of improvement actions

Improvement actions can be classified into 2 different categories. At the one hand actions are targeted at remediating dissatisfaction with procedural or process related issues. Organisations are working on simplifying, designing or redesigning processes. Work out different or better ways in delivering the service(s). At the other hand improvement actions are focussing on elements relating to personal aspects of the delivering of services. Actions in this context relate to training and behavioural aspects of staff.

Dissatisfaction with procedures, duration, timeliness, accessibility, etc.

Development of procedures, Business Process Re-engineering, Channel management & control, less red tape, simplification,

Dissatisfaction with employees, personal service

Codes of conduct, skills and competences training, CRM,

CASE *METTIAMOCI LA FACCIA* - SHOW YOUR FACE- (**ITALY)**

At the end of March 2009, the Italian Ministry for Public Administration and Innovation has launched the project *Mettiamoci La Faccia* (Show Your Face) for all Italian public administrations. The basic idea is that citizens/users assess a public administration by using emoticons, e.g. the figure beneath ("Express your opinion on the services

provided by this office, by selecting one of the coloured symbols").
If users choose the red emoticon (negative assessment) there is a further step to express the reason for dissatisfaction, among four different options: waiting time, necessity to return, employee expertise/capability, negative answer. An identical interface is used for the online channel. Concerning the phone channel, the user will vote in a numerical way through the push-button phone.

The use of emoticons is particularly suitable for assessing customer satisfaction of "individual demand services" (e.g. deliverable through a single interaction between users and administration, with low complexity and low-intensity relation between user-provider). On the contrary, the model is less suitable for both consulting/personal services, and those services in which several administrations are involved in the delivering procedure.

The Mettiamoci la faccia system has several advantages: it is easy to understand and to use for the user and it allows the administration to have synthetic results. In fact, the information obtained through emoticons (summarized by a periodic reporting systems), although limited compared with the one obtained through customer satisfaction surveys, can be easily collected and used as a management tool for several purposes: to assess the perceived quality, to evaluate services improvement, to promote users participation and information/communication campaigns to the public and stakeholders.

Since the launch of the initiative (March 2009) till now (October 2011), 668 offices and more that 2775 service desks are involved, together with web and phone services. Considering the same time period, more than 10 million users have already assessed public administration services using emoticons.

An evaluation of the initiative was carried out from March 2009 to April 2010. As far as administrations are concerned users appreciate the possibility to participate in the improvement of services and confirm the simplicity of the voting system. More than half of the administrations declare that the opinion of the users has changed positively, as a result of improvement initiatives implemented.

In order to address 5700 small Italian municipalities and some 300 unions, a specific initiative "Show your face - Small Towns", managed together by the Department of Public Administration and the Department for the Digitization of Public Administration and Technological Innovation, was also launched in October 2009. Those institutions are supported with a 500 euros bonus for the purchase of the customer satisfaction assessment devices and – additionally- for (the purchase) of digital signature and e-mail Certificate. This initiative aims at raising customer satisfaction to improve the quality of services provided in municipalities with less than 5000 residents and promoting technological innovation, in order to respect the provisions of the E-Gov Plan 2012.

The administrations which joined the initiative are also assisted in the development of both internal and external communication activities as these are crucial for: a) informing the citizens/users about the opportunity of services assessment b) providing feedback to users and citizens c) involving the staff. For this purpose the Department of Public Administration created in July 2011 a communication kit in order to support public administration involved.

When making decisions about which drivers to take action on, it is important to consider their impact on the broader customer experience as well as on satisfaction scores. This includes understanding:

- the impact on customer behaviour of changing the driver (e.g. keeping customers informed can reduce the number of inbound enquiries; improving the experience of using the health service can encourage participation in preventive care),

- the impact on other drivers within the analysis (e.g. if inbound calls are reduced, speed of response is likely to improve; higher participation in preventive **healthcare can mean congestion in services),**
- what would be required in order to change the driver (e.g. is there something wrong with a process that can be fixed relatively quickly, or is the driver influenced by perceptions that will take time to change),
- whether there are changes that can be made to the service (e.g. which deliver cost efficiencies) but which will not have an adverse effect on customer satisfaction.

CASE THE TAX OFFICE OF RAWICZ (POLAND)

The Tax Office of Rawicz has been surveying the levels of customer satisfaction since 2003. The purpose of the surveys was to learn about the customer satisfaction level, customer expectations and feedback about the solutions offered. A detailed survey is carried out at least once a year. The survey uses standardised questionnaires and repeated questions, which ensures that patterns and trends can be traced in responses and customer satisfaction levels. There is also an on-going monthly survey asking respondents directly about their assessment of the service level.

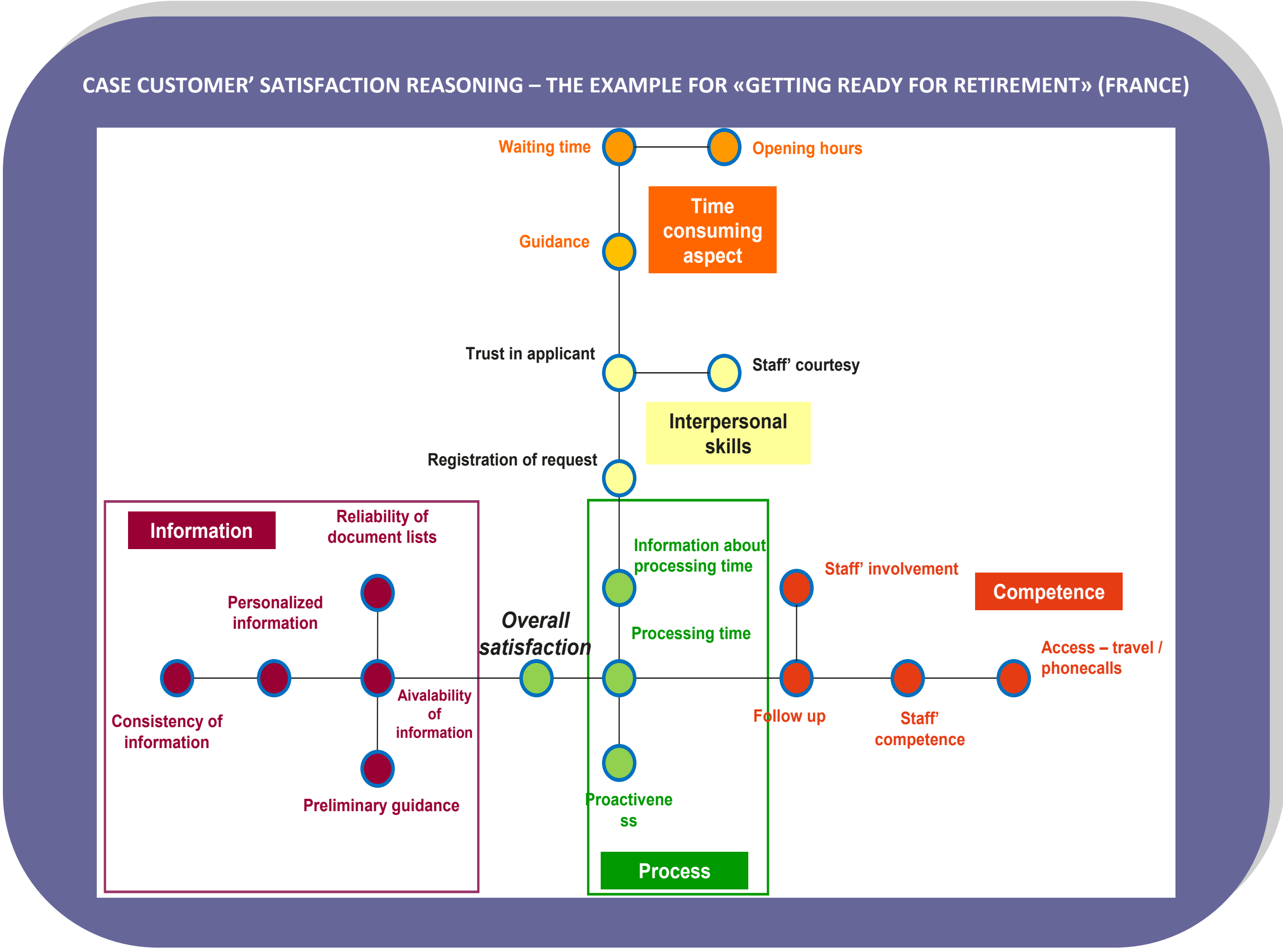
Since 2004, numerous improvements were introduced at the Office, including: organization of a professional Customer Service Room; registering tax returns in the Customer's presence (the document is correctly filled in during a single visit); conducting information and training campaigns (i.e. open door events for taxpayers, sending information directly to Customers' e-mail addresses, etc.); and organizing a children's corner. The changes we have introduced were tangible from the Customers' point of view, as they were also linked with a dialogue that we have commenced with our Customers. During the period of 2008 – 2010 we focused mainly on perfecting the previously introduced solutions, as well as on improving the infrastructure of the Customer Service Room, training the personnel, but also on undertaking new initiatives, such as cooperation with social welfare centres in issuing certificates required and promoting electronic forms of communication between the Customer and the Office.

The French case illustrates this approach of moving from measurement to action. Improving service quality implies listening to users and carrying out satisfaction surveys. But what should be done with the findings? What does a 70 or 80% satisfaction rate actually mean? How do we move from measuring satisfaction to establishing a proper action plan? How do we know what to start with and what will have the largest impact? What to do first and what will be the best combination of factors to activate? How to predict the impact of these actions? These questions are becoming even more important in a context of economic crisis and budgetary restrictions. After a satisfaction survey, secondary statistical analyses (based on the Bayesian network) can be used to go beyond a simple assessment of what was rated highly and what poorly. The Bayesian Networks allows us:

A) To explore the users' mind by exploring without any a priori, the connections between the different determinants, so that the structure of the links between them can emerge.
B) To predict the best scenarios of actions by modelling overall satisfaction and identify the combination of actions with the greatest – statistical – impact.

A. Exploring user's satisfaction reasoning

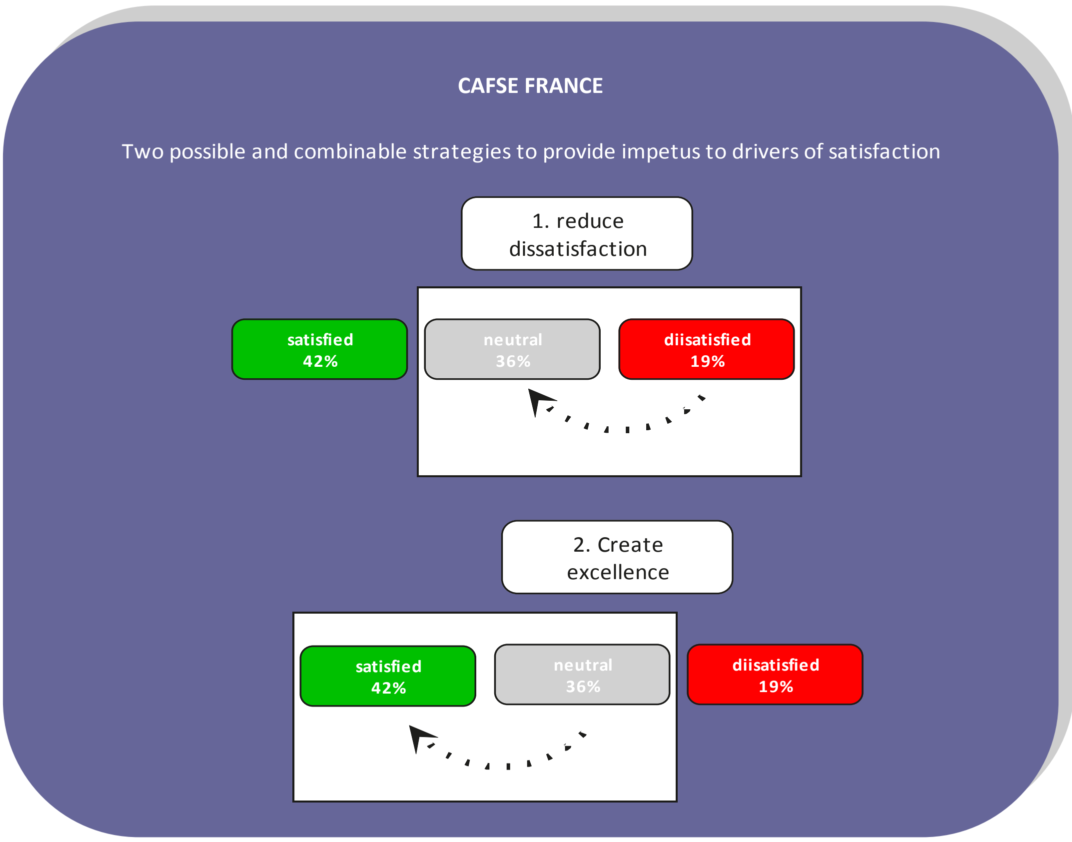
The approach makes it possible to answer the following questions: How are my variables organised? And what user perception do they reflect? By mapping the customers reasoning the causality (links and interdependency) between variables became clear at the one side and it made it also possible to group homogeneous variables (the same colours in the below example.



The overall satisfaction in this case is strongly connected to "the information about the steps to take" and about the "processing time".

B. Predicting the best scenarios of actions

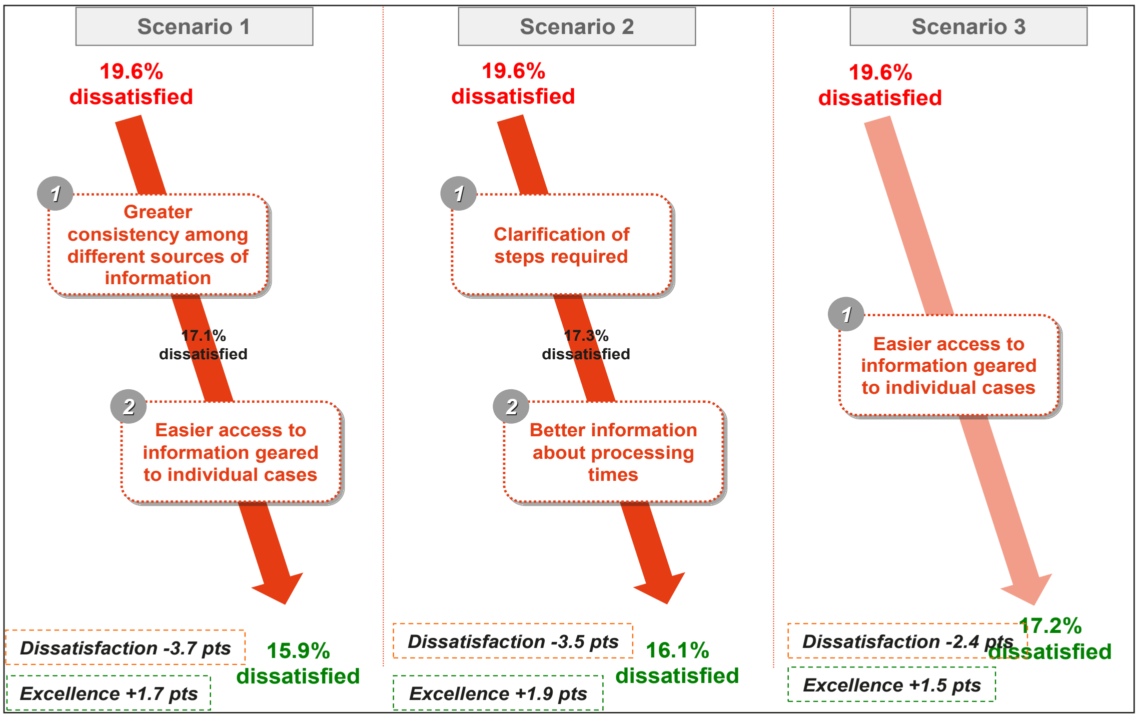
When we consider improving the user's satisfaction, two strategies are possible: Increasing the number of satisfied people or reducing the



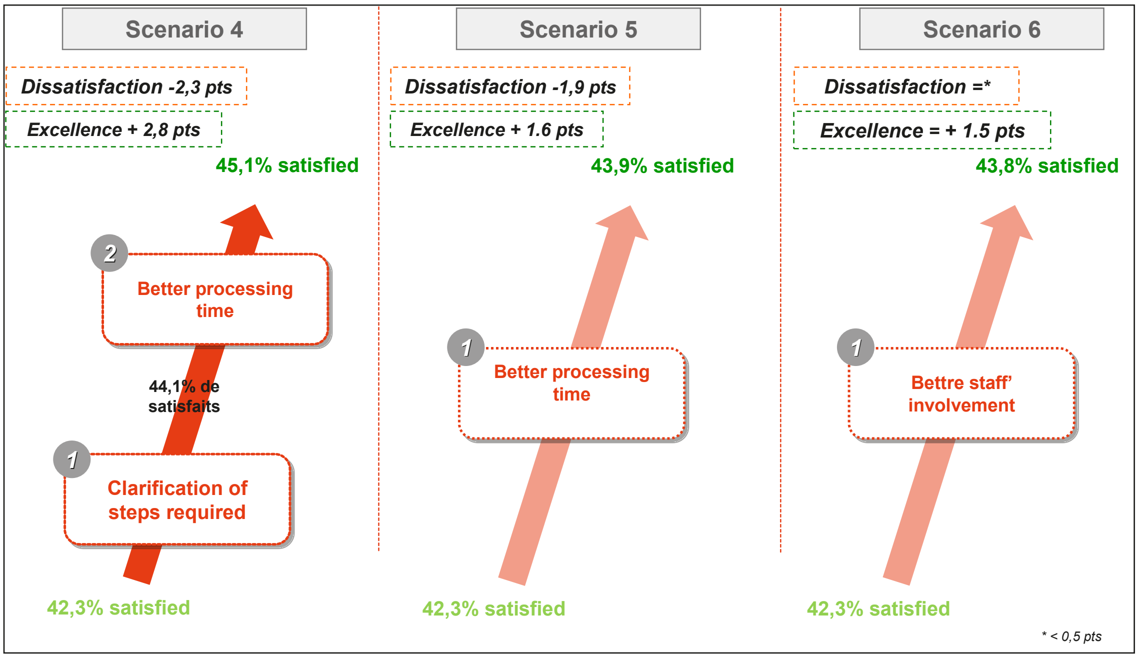
number of dissatisfied ones. Obviously, these strategies depend on the distribution of observed satisfaction in the study. The third move which consists in transforming people from the dissatisfied group into people of the satisfied group is spread because it is less realistic.

The advantage of this method lies in the fact that we measure the impact of modifying a criteria on the general satisfaction but also on all the other criteria. By doing so, we come closer to the real conditions of action plans implementation. As a consequence, we get the optimal scenario of combined action plans.

Reducing dissatisfaction: three best scenarios

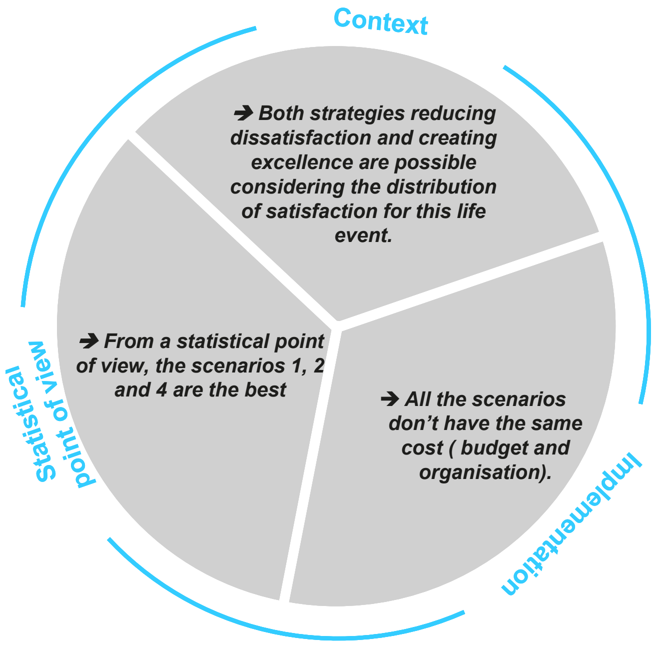


Generating excellence: three best scenarios



Improving the clarity of the required steps combined with improving communication about processing time makes it possible to lower the dissatisfied user rate from 19.6% to 16.1% (scenario 2).

In conclusion, the choice of the best scenario of action can be made by considering three dimensions:
1) the context of users' satisfaction, (need to raise the satisfaction and/or to reduce dissatisfaction)
2) the result of the statistical analysis
3) but also the feasibility of the action plans implementation (the scenario 2 is easier to implement than the scenario 1 for the same decrease of dissatisfaction!). This brings us to the organizational enablers for the improvement actions.



CASE ITALY

As discussed in part 1 of this publication (see case Italy I) the cooperation between the Italian Department for Public Administration and Innovation and the non-profit organisation *Cittadinanzattiva* resulted in a new citizen participation initiative related to service quality in Southern Italy. Citizens were given the opportunity to evaluate local services and facilities, not just through citizen surveys but as civic evaluators.

Both citizens and local authorities considered the contribution of civic associations as positively helpful to the management of the local activities during the experimentation. The public managers appreciated the participation of citizens not only as an opportunity of learning new way of managing public services but, moreover, as a way of developing social capital and a feeling of civic belonging.

With regard to the general effectiveness of the initiative, the local authorities, although underlining the shortage of time and resources for managing such activities, declared their continued interest in the project and their willingness to give feedback to citizens and to implement concrete service improvements arising from the monitoring exercises.

Citizens, too, saw the need to move from the evaluation phase to the implementation of improvements. They expected feedback once the local report had been presented to the local authority. In the current financial crisis the local authorities cannot deal with all the weaknesses identified by the citizen evaluators and "repair all the potholes" as one citizen put it. One way forward could be an initial agreement of a charter between the involved local authority and citizen evaluators which specifies the obligations of both parties. Most importantly, the involved citizens expect feedback of the local authority on what kind of actions will be taken as a result of the evaluation.

A learning point was how to make the results of the evaluation sustainable and effective. In particular, representatives of local councils thought that it would be important to incorporate the evaluation in the strategic planning process of the local council so that the evaluation of the citizens would help the council to determine strategic priorities.

Last but not least, all stakeholders agreed that the methodology could be used to evaluate other public services at neighbourhood level provided that new dimensions and indicators of quality are jointly defined.

2. Organisational enablers for improvement

Once action points have been identified, it is critical to reiterate the importance of involving all stakeholders (inside and outside) in the process of intervention and change, and to ensure there is buy-in at a senior level for any 'difficult' decisions. Many public organisations invest in mechanical customer orientation but 'forget to tackle' the culture. The result is that structural improvements and growth in customer satisfaction are limited. Developing these instruments is (relatively) easy. It only demands a limited involvement from staff at the different levels of the organisation.

In many cases it is only a person or a limited team that is responsible for the topic in an organisation. The danger is that setting up these instruments becomes a goal in itself and that the use in and for the organisation is limited. This purely mechanical use of instruments is not enough to become a citizen/users driven organisation. The passionate, cultural shift is however necessary if public sector organisation wants to listen, involve and co-operate with citizen/users to have an impact on the long term performance of public sector organisations.

If the culture of an organisation is not shifting from a purely internal, process and product driven approach towards a demand and citizen/user approach it doesn't change much. Instruments are in that case only serving internal purposes and the behaviour of staff and leaders towards citizen/users is not changing. Organisations want to live up to the consequences of this citizen/user driven approach. This demands more than a voluntary behaviour towards the issue. Leaders need to be aware that the choice to become a citizen/user driven organisation demands training and coaching of staff, different ways of communicating inside, outside and towards the (political) authorities. It demands an approach from being an "inward looking (and acting) organisation" towards an "outward looking and acting organisation".

CASE STUDY GRANT AUTHORITY (AUSTRIA)

The Austrian Study Grant Authority regularly measures the customers' satisfaction, requesting service quality aspects like: accessibility, competence, friendliness of staff, etc. A main part of the questionnaire is asking for the most important fields of customer satisfaction to figure out, where priorities are located. In the questionnaires there are always open questions to gather suggestions to improve services. The results are discussed in "Kaizan groups" or projects like KVP (continuously improving process) where internal employees construct better forms and services according to the proposals from the questionnaires or other Customer Satisfaction data. All employees are reported the main results of the measurement. They too can suggest improvements via an internal idea-management system that gathers and provides ideas for quality improvement.

This information – together with information from employee satisfaction surveys, CAF self-assessments, etc. – serves as a basis for the yearly action plans. These action plans are developed among a group of managers, containing the head of the organisation, 2 people from the ministry and some "organisational leaders" from the regions. There are 3 more kinds of groups who work on permanent improvement: ad hoc working groups (strong need for a quick improvement), continuous improving circles meeting regularly; permanent or ad hoc working groups depending on the issue and the priority. Improvement actions are formulated in the action plan according to the following structure:

- Target – what does the organization want to improve with the planned action
- Strategy - how to set the action into concrete steps
- Action - concrete steps ("to do`s)
- Source – shows, which kind of source the need of this action is derived from
- Priority – high-low-middle
- Start and end of a certain action

There is a permanent monitoring on different levels and on different fields, but there are also yearly surveys on the highest priority actions (needs) and also regular surveys in 3 main fields like:

- Main business (study grant services);
- Questioning students who are "permanent clients" each second year about needs, service delivery etc.
- Special target group of "foreign clients";

The results of these surveys become part of the next action plan. In a certain way the procedures as a whole are following the quality-management circle.

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE (UK)

In 2008 the Customer Service Excellence initiative was launched. The Government wants public services for all that are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering – with the citizen always and everywhere at the heart of public service provision. With this in mind Customer Service Excellence was developed to offer public services a practical tool for driving customer-focused change within their organisation.

The foundation of this tool is the *Customer Service Excellence* standard which tests in great depth those areas that research has indicated are a priority for customers. In order for organisations to be recognised as achieving Customer Service Excellence they must be successfully assessed against the criteria of the standard by one of the licensed certification bodies. The five criteria of Customer Service Excellence include:

1. ***Customer Insight***

Effectively identifying your customers, consulting with them in a meaningful way and efficiently measuring the outcomes of your service are a vital part of this approach. It's not just about being able to collect information; it's about having the ability to use that information.

2. ***The Culture of the Organisation***

It is challenging for an organisation to build and foster a truly customer-focused culture. To cultivate and embed this there must be a commitment to it throughout an organisation, from the strategic leader to the front line staff.

3. ***Information and Access***

Customers value accurate and comprehensive information that is delivered or available through the most appropriate channel for them. Putting your customer first can be an important step towards providing effective communication.

4. ***Delivery***

How you carry out your business, the outcomes for your customer, and how you manage any problems that arise can determine your organisation's success. Customers' views about the outcomes of your services are just as important as achieving the main indicators your organisation uses to measure its performance. Listening to, and asking for comments, feedback and complaints can be a great way to make small adjustments to the way your organisation runs.

5. ***Timeliness and Quality of Service***

The promptness of initial contact and keeping to agreed timescales is crucial to your customers satisfaction. However speed can be achieved at the expense of quality, therefore the issue of timeliness has to be combined with quality of service to ensure the best possible result for customers.

The detailed criteria, and their relevant elements, can be found in the Customer Service Excellence standard which is available to download from the website **www.cse.cabinetoffice.gov.uk**. On this website a lot of other useful information on the standard, best practices, and a hub with explanation on tools and techniques, can also be found.

The Customer Service Excellence is designed to operate on three distinct levels:

- ***As a driver of continuous improvement*****.** By allowing organisations to self-assess their capability, using the online self-assessment tool, in relation to customer focused service delivery, identifying areas and methods for improvement;
- ***As a skills development tool.*** By allowing individuals and teams within the organisation to explore and acquire new skills in the area of customer focus and customer engagement, thus building their capacity for delivering improved services;
- ***As an independent validation of achievement*****.** By allowing organisations to seek formal accreditation to the Customer Service Excellence standard, demonstrate their competence, identify key areas for improvement and celebrate their success.

We include here the example from the Customer Service Excellence Standard concerning the second criteria "The culture of the organisation". [8] This criterion is therefore concerned with the support for customer focused approaches throughout the organisation so that excellent

[8] Cabinet Office (2008), *Customer Service Exellence Standard*, pp. 8-9.

service is delivered to all customers. Also included here are two of the key drivers relating to staff behaviour – professionalism and attitude. These have been brought together and reinforced by a requirement that this approach is fully supported by the leadership team.

Criterion 2: The Culture of the Organisation		
	2.1 Leadership, Policy and Culture	
	Element	**Guidance**
2.1.1	There is corporate commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery and leaders in our organisation actively support this and advocate for customers.	• Corporate vision and values statements. • Examples of how your organisation's leaders have shown that they recognise the importance of customer focus and actively promote activities that allow your organisation to gain an understanding of its customers.
2.1.2	We use customer insight to inform policy and strategy and to prioritise service improvement activity.	• Customers' and staff's views on how your knowledge of customer groups informs your policies. • Examples of how customer insight drives your policies, and how this influences the way in which you design your services.
2.1.3	We have policies and procedures that support the right of all customers to expect excellent levels of service.	• Customer care, equal opportunities, disability and other policies and procedures relating to fair treatment. • Information you provide to customers on what they are entitled to.
2.1.4	We ensure that all customers and customer groups are treated fairly and this is confirmed by feedback and the measurement of customer experience.	• Evidence from mystery shoppers (where relevant and appropriate). • Customers' and staff's testimony and other feedback.
2.1.5	We protect customers' privacy both in face-to-face discussions and in the transfer and storage of customer information.	• Procedures for making sure you protect customers' privacy, including having secure computer systems and making checks on customers' identity. • Policies on data protection and staff guidance on this.
2.1.6	We empower and encourage all employees to actively promote and participate in the customer-focused culture of our organisation.	• Examples of customer and staff testimony about their involvement and empowerment. • Staff policies and procedures manuals. • Examples of your approaches to promote customer focus throughout the organisation.

	2.2 Staff Professionalism and Attitude	
	Element	**Guidance**
2.1.1	We can demonstrate our commitment to developing and delivering customer -focused services through our recruitment, training and development policies for staff.	• Job specifications and recruitment procedures. • Details of the training you have provided to all your employees, and their opportunities for further development.
2.1.2	Our staff are polite and friendly to customers and have an understanding of customer needs.	• Customer service policies and staff guidance. • Evidence from mystery shoppers (where relevant) and internal monitoring. • Customers' views and other feedback, including comments on the service provided by individual staff members.
2.1.3	We prioritise customer focus at all levels of our organisation and evaluate individual and team commitment through the performance management system.	• Examples of how customer feedback is linked to your assessment of staff. • Include staff recognition and reward schemes, if relevant and appropriate.
2.1.4	We can demonstrate how customer-facing staffs' insights and experiences are incorporated into internal processes, policy development and service planning.	• Ways in which staff give their views and details on how you use their feedback. • Details of improvements that you have made as a result of staff feedback. • Examples of how you have improved the processes for passing on customers' information throughout your organisation.
2.1.5	We value the contribution our staff make to delivering customer focused services, and leaders, managers and staff demonstrate these behaviours.	• Examples of how your organisation values the role of customer service staff, by recognising and rewarding the contributions of individual staff members and teams. • Evidence that providing customer-focused services is a

		priority at all levels of the organisation, from the front line (members of staff who deal with the public) to senior managers and all levels in between.

This example perfectly illustrated the attention organisations need to have for the organisational aspects in working on customer satisfaction management.

Service

Ser·vice

/ˈsɜː(r)vɪs/

Noun

1. the work that people who work in shops, restaurants, hotels, etc. do to help customers

2. a system that supplies something that people need

Part 5: Implementing and follow-up

"Do we achieve sustainable results over time?"

Transforming service delivery through customer satisfaction measurement is a journey rather than a one-off process. The survey will need to be refreshed over time and for this reason many programmes measuring customer satisfaction are run as tracking surveys, carried out and providing results on a regular basis at intervals ranging from every few years to monthly or even weekly according to the type of service and its needs. For most public services customer satisfaction measurement will need to be carried out on at least an annual basis if information is to be timely enough to drive service improvement. A transactional service undergoing a process of rapid change and improvement might track top-line measures through their call centre on a weekly basis to monitor progress.

The availability of consistent customer satisfaction measurement over time has two major advantages. Firstly, it opens the door to different types of analysis based on time-series data. This can be particularly useful in understanding the relationship of potential drivers and measures of satisfaction which are external to the survey (e.g. waiting times, number of complaints) with the main customer satisfaction measure. This can help to identify areas for action and alternative measures for tracking success which are based on data sources which are available more regularly and quickly than survey data.

Secondly, it enables progress to be tracked over the short and medium term. If changes to customer satisfaction and its drivers are to provide useable feedback on the service improvement process, it is important to align frequency of measurement to the speed of change in the service. This may be achieved by carrying out additional 'boost' surveys to cover significant service changes, which may not need to cover the full scope of the main survey.

A note of caution: although customer satisfaction measurement is very useful for monitoring progress in the short to medium-term, long-term trends often have little to contribute to service improvement. Changes in customers' attitudes and perceptions outside both the scope of the survey and the control of the organisation are likely to have such a substantial impact on customer satisfaction, as to make such comparisons of little value. Also, quite simply, customers get used to higher levels of service and over time their satisfaction drops. Therefore, it is usually more important to ensure measures are as effective as possible in understanding the current customer experience, than to maintain the continuity of existing measures which may be out-dated. We will outline some important aspects in monitoring and tracking performance.

1. Setting standards & Citizen/customer charters[9]

A citizen charter is a unilateral declaration by a public sector service whereby the service, within the tasks stipulated for it by legislation and regulations, commits to a number of standards for its services and subsequently publishes these standards. This allows members of the public to address the service in question as directly as possible. The core of a citizen charter is the promise of expected quality of the service. The essence is formed by the 3 C's:

- **C**lient-oriented standards
- **C**ommunication
- **C**ommitment

The radical idea behind the citizen charter is to give rights to the clients of public services. The rights are not statutory, but the 'pressure' of the promise is such that the organisation will do a great deal to fulfil the promises. With this approach, the citizen charter helps the client switch from a relatively passive role of waiting for what the organisation has in mind for him or her. The offered rights stimulate the idea that the organisation treats him with respect. This gives the client a certain dignity.

CASE QUALITY SERVICE CHARTER INITIATIVE (MALTA)

In 1999 the Maltese Public Service launched a Quality Service Charter initiative. Under this initiative, which falls under the remit of the Charter Support Unit within the Office of the Prime Minister, government departments and offices began to launch charters in which they committed themselves to meeting specific standards of service in their dealings with members of the public or other government organisations. By way of preparation for the launch of their charters, the departments and offices concerned conducted a process of consultation with both staff and customers and they carried out changes to their business processes in order to improve service quality.

In order to provide added support to government organisations, a practical guide (Quality Service Charter handbook - www.servicecharters.gov.mt) was developed.

The service standards indicate what the client can expect. The most important standards are concrete and measurable. Therefore: *you will be helped within 15 minutes* ('hard') and not *ready while you wait* ('not concrete'). The client him/herself can then determine whether or not the standards are met.

The charter can also comprise a 'soft' standard, such as: *We will treat you with friendliness and respect*.

A standard is formulated on the basis of the individual client's perspective. Therefore: *you can expect to receive an answer from us within two weeks,* and not *95 per cent of the letters are processed within two weeks*.

[9] This part is based upon the work "Guidelines for Citizen Charters" which has been carried out by the Netherlands in the context of IPSG.

CASE CITIZEN CHARTERS (ROMANIA)

We discussed in part 3 (see supra) that the Romanian National Agency of Civil Servants in partnership with the Association *Assistance and Programs for Sustainable Development – Agenda 21* aimed at increasing the role of civil society in promoting good governance and citizens' participation in the process of designing local level policies. Two surveys – one for citizens and one for civil servants - had to provide the necessary information for the development of a Citizens' Charter and an awarding system of good practices of engaging citizens in the process of institutional reforming and decisional transparency. Now, we will discuss the 15 Citizens Charters elaborated by the public institutions and authorities involved in the project.

Citizens' charter is a document that stands for the systematic efforts and the firmly engagement of public authorities/institutions addressed to citizens/ beneficiaries of their specific services for respecting services' standards, constantly inform and consult citizens, promote and support non-discrimination principles in offering services and access to services, setting up proper and efficient mechanisms of answering to requests, applications, notices, petitions, efficient usage of funds, promotion of ethical principles in public policies and fight against any corruption forms. Citizens' charter is also an internal mechanism of self-improvement and an efficient way (canal) of communication with citizens.

In this case, the 15 Citizens' Charters were developed with the coordination group of each institution, members of the volunteer body and representatives of the project team. The final Citizens' Charters from local partners were collected in order to introduce them in a compendium to be multiplied for the final conference.

The Charters had two main components: (A) a synthesis of the legislation that restricts the citizens – public local institutions relationship and (B) their services, based on the results of consultations with civil servants and their recommendations for improving the implementation of these regulations coming from the volunteers' report. The charter also included different components for each type of institution involved in the project and for each location, for revealing the local hallmark. Following the structure mentioned above, the Charters had approximately the same categories:

1. Information about the institution: Mission, vision, objectives and organizational structure (including subordinate institutions);
2. Offer
3. Events
4. Rights and obligations of clients/citizens/customers
5. Contact details

A training course was also part of the coordination team and they had as main responsibility to disseminate the Charter through making it public on their website, on the intranet and displaying in public places or to making it public for the local press. The charter of each institution was multiplied and was made available to the citizens by posting it at the public relations or the registry offices.

The charters influenced institutions to become more citizen-oriented and more innovative with minimal financial implications. The dissemination of the charters among the local public authorities and institutions during the final conference determined some of them to develop their own charters.

The standards can concern the entire spectrum of service. They can say something about a service/product in itself (*the street lighting will be repaired within two working days*); about the process (*you will receive a digital report confirmation*) and as regards content (*on your request, we will speak with you in a closed consultation room*).

Friendly treatment is an intrinsic standard. In various surveys, the importance of good treatment is repeatedly emphasised, in view of the great many complaints in this regard. An important underlying goal of citizen charters is to improve the relationship with the client. Then a citizen charter can also make an explicit report concerning treatment (*if you do not consider our treatment to be friendly, we kindly request that you immediately call us to account*).

Research shows that time is important in the evaluation of the quality of service. So keep in mind the time aspect when drawing up the standards. This can involve the time that the client must wait before he/she is helped, but also, for example, the time in which the client can expect to receive an answer to a request/question/etc.

It is important that the standards in the charter are aimed at the relevant aspects of the service. For example, if a citizen lodges a complaint with your organisation, then it is important that the charter not only lists the complaints procedure, but also how quickly the complaint is dealt with. So: *You will receive a message within 5 working days regarding how we will deal with your complaint within 4 weeks*.

It is important that the charter is not too long. Keep it short by only indicating the standards that are the most important for the client.

A. Communicating

When the citizen charter is drawn up, it must also be made public. The fact is, the client must know what he/she can expect and what he/she can claim. Good information concerning the service that the client may expect contributes toward satisfaction regarding the service. Therefore it is recommended that clients be informed in an understandable and easy manner and at the moment that this applies to them.

In any case, the service standards are communicated on the spot, such as at the counter. See to it that the standards are available to clients at the moment that they will most likely need them.

In addition, the charter must be made public via as many relevant contact channels as possible (counter, print work, Internet, city bus). When placing these standards on the website, devote attention to clear navigation. Not only the number of steps in the charter is important, but the designation as well. A link to the 'charter guideline', or 'guarantee' is not as appealing to the client as, for example, 'What type of service can you expect from us'.

With the communication of a charter, it is recommended that an administrative sender/person, mentioned by name, be linked to the charter, who assumes responsibility for realising the standards him/herself. This sender can be the head of the department, the Mayor or the Council. With this approach, an organisation can show that it takes its own service seriously. An added advantage is that the administrative involvement in the citizen charter increases.

B. Commitment

The whole idea behind a charter is that the organisation is committed to realising the standards. Clearly indicate the consequences if a promise is not kept. The possible actions differ per country. It could be solved internally within the organisation. In practice there are countries that do not provide some kind of exchange, while others do. In the latter case, options are letters of apology to clients, or small compensations. The latter are primarily symbolic, but since they have a financial

BENEFITS OF SERVICE CHARTERS

- Help public agencies to manage the expectations of service users
- Provide a framework for consultations with service users
- Encourage public agencies to measure and assess performance
- Make public agencies more transparent by telling the public about the standards they can expect – and how agencies have performed against those standards
- Push public agencies to improve performance where promised standards have not been achieved
- Increase satisfaction of service users

component, the signal to the budget makers will be clear.
Providing some kind of exchange (letter of apology or compensation) convinces clients that the organisation takes them seriously. This gives the formerly 'powerless' client a convenient tool to seek immediate rectification from the organisation.
Providing a kind of exchange also stimulates the organisation. It impresses the gravity of the situation upon every employee and manager. So if for example a compensation is awarded too often, this will act as a catalyst for improving (or guaranteeing) the quality of the service. Of course, the goal of standards with some kind of exchange is to rarely give it.

C. Who needs a citizen charter?

The citizen charter is suitable for all organisational elements with client contacts. Clients include citizens, entrepreneurs, students, patients and non-governmental organisations.
The most important users of the charter are of course the *clients who apply to your service*. With the charter, they will have more insight into your service and will attune their expectations on the basis of the service standards that are included in the charter.
Together with the *clients*, *the employees of the front office* are an important user group of the citizen charter. If all goes well, having a charter leads to a change of attitude, working method and performance.
And last, but not least, improving the methods and performance cannot be achieved without the involvement and commitment of the management.

2. Defining indicators & objectives

In many public sector organisations, the administrative culture is very inward-looking. Service charters give your agency a good excuse to consult with service users. It is still the case that many professionals believe that they know best what is good for their users. However, we often find that what users expect and what public officials think they expect is rather different – this is typically referred to as the 'expectations gap'. At the same time, service charters will encourage your agency to assess and monitor performance. A service charter without a performance measurement system will always remain a paper tiger.

In order to know whether you have achieved your objectives you need to define performance indicators and targets. A performance indicator explains how to measure the achievement of an objective. A performance target specifies a quantified level of a performance indicator to be achieved with a specified period of time. This means that performance targets must always relate to objectives (which is why we asked you to draft a 'hierarchy of objectives' before you define performance indicators and targets. A target is always a number which refers to a period of time. Some organisations wonder why it is necessary to define targets, given that legal regulations already provide standards. It is correct that legal norms often define minimum standards for public services. However, your organisation may choose to go beyond the minimum standard or define targets for less-regulated services in order to drive service improvements. Legal standards can therefore sometimes be viewed as the lowest acceptable standards.

Of course, the challenge in practice is to decide at what level to set a target. Ideally, targets should be ambitious, i.e. push your organisation to improve but still be realistic. Ideally, targets are set by comparison, usually either between time periods or across organisations.

So when you are in the position to have a baseline in your organisation for this year, you should increase the target for next year. But for some objectives you may have no baseline so you need to experiment and set a provisional target which you may have to correct upwards or downwards when you have performance information.

Different kind of performance indicators can be elaborated.
Input indicators are those indicators that measure the extent of resources which an organisation has available or commits to meet its objectives. Personnel, infrastructure, finance and premises are typical inputs. For example, one such performance indicator in the example above is: % of employees who take part in a training programme focussing on children and young people services.

Activity indicators measure the extent or volume of the processes which convert resources into outputs: e. g. % of events which are designed for 10–15 year old library users.

Output indicators refer to the results of activities: e. g. percentage of young people aged 10-15 of all library users or the number of free internet stations available in the library.

Finally, *outcome indicators* refer to the impact of the service or programme among service users and the wider community: e.g. satisfaction of young library users with the services provided; increase of school performance of young people in a city. It is evident that outcome indicators are the most ambitious ones. First, it may take quite a long time until the desired impact becomes visible or measurable. Second, the impact will be influenced by other organisations and the external environment as well. In other words, your organisation cannot control the impact alone. Therefore, outcomes are often not measured. However, politicians, the media and the wider public will always be most interested in outcomes and not in specific performance information of individual services.

Finally, before finalising your performance indicators and targets you may want to test how 'fit for purpose' your definitions are. This test is commonly known as the SMART test (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely). It is widely used to check the quality of performance targets.

Specific targets are those which answer in a precise way the questions of what, who, and where. For instance, consider that you want to improve examination results of school students in the secondary school system. If you propose the following target (to *improve secondary school examination results*), it is unspecific because it does not specify how much improvement you want to have, over what period. A specific target here would be along the lines: *to increase the proportion of students leaving secondary school with matriculation to 80% by summer 2012.*

A *measurable* target means that there is the possibility of measuring the action(s) associated with the objective. It is not enough to give a figure in the objective to make it measurable. You should consider what procedures will help you to monitor, measure and record actions. If you cannot quantify the actions, the objective is likely to be wrongly formulated. For instance, you might put a figure in an objective, which cannot be really quantified (*increase to 60% the smiles among staff delivering services directly to the public)*. You do have a figure, but how would you define, measure and record a smile? The procedure for measuring the target of the previous paragraph (*to increase the proportion of students leaving secondary school with matriculation to 80% by summer 2012*) would be, for instance, the annual collection of the matriculation results of all students in their last year at school.

CASE COMPLAINTS AND SUGGESTION MANAGEMENT IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CELJE (SLOVENIA)

In everyday functioning, all public institutions deal with questions, which are not subjects of official procedures provided by the law. Even though these questions are not official, they are of significant importance for public administration when communicating with its users. In the Municipality of Celje in Slovenia, such communication problems are dealt with by 'Servis 48'.

In past years, the communication with local residents, not related to administrative procedures of the local community, was unplanned and non-coordinated. This led to uneasiness among local residents and gave an impression that professional services do not do their work. The pace of work was considered too slow and inefficient. Therefore, the aim of the Municipality of Celje was to provide the general public with an interactive, publicly accessible and free-of-charge service intended for local residents to forward their questions, ideas and suggestions about the areas being within the competence of the Municipality of Celje. The professional service would have the replies prepared within 48 hours. To this end, as of 22 November 2005, 'Servis 48' service has been made available in Celje. All who have any questions, initiatives, ideas or suggestions can make a free call, send an e-mail, offer their suggestions and questions on the web site of the service or contact the office of 'Servis 48' in person.

> *"Do you have ideas, suggestions or questions about the areas within the competence of the Municipality of Celje? Do you believe that a certain matter can be improved, arranged or remedied? If you happen to notice that public lighting is off, town equipment damaged, piles of litter accumulated or dumping area emerged... then just click 'enter' and write down your idea, suggestion or question."*

The service was fully supported in terms of communication, which contributed to the greater satisfaction of local residents and boosted the reputation of the Municipality and town of Celje. Any user's suggestion, idea or question is forwarded by the administrator of 'Servis 48' in the shortest time possible to responsible professional services of the Municipality of Celje and published on the website. At this point the 48-hour deadline begins to run, activities are carried out and answer(s) are published on the website. The users' questions received on the working day before 2 p.m. are published on the same day; all questions received after 2 p.m. or during work-free days are forwarded on the first subsequent working day by 10 a.m. The website enables the public to follow the status (new/ under consideration/ completed) of suggestions, ideas or questions made by the users, the answers concerned and the related activities. Upon request, the answers are provided by e-mail or over the phone.

The Municipality of Celje wishes and aims to be able to remedy or remove adverse effects spoiling the image of the town. Within 48 hours, the bulbs of town lighting can be replaced, the bench repaired, the litter removed, the green lawns mowed and similar. If this is not feasible, an answer will be prepared within 48 hours, providing reasons for the failure in delivery and indicating when it will be possible to eliminate the disturbance. We must bear in mind that the municipality is limited by and committed to a rational use of resources and budgetary funds.

'Servis 48' has several advantages. The service encourages local residents to participate in creating a better and nicer image of the town and contributes to the transparent functioning of the municipal administration. Its interactive function facilitates the control of users over the functioning of the local community, professional services, public enterprises, concessionaires and other service providers. The service deals with communication problems in a consistent and transparent manner, which enables the traceability of information at all levels. Furthermore, 'Servis 48' forms a rich archive/database on the functioning of the community.

An *attainable* target is one which can be achieved within the time frame and within the means, resources and capabilities of your team and those associated with you, which includes not only other departments of the organisation but also external stakeholders. In many public services it is not sensible to set targets which require very rapid achievement, especially if partners are involved. For example, if you set a target such as "*to reduce obesity* *among teenagers at schools by 50% within one year*)", you will soon find out that your campaign, however well designed, is fighting against not only the physiology of current

teenagers but also their psychology and the advertising budgets of fast food chains. Such a target is likely to be unrealistic, which can demoralise those trying to achieve them and lay them open to derision in the media. Therefore, you might consider a rather less ambitious target. On the other hand, if you set a very unambitious target, say *increase the number of fishing permits issued from an office on the day of application to 85% within two years*

CASE DE LIJN PUBLIC TRANSPORT ORGANISER **(BELGIUM)**

De Lijn acts as public transport organiser in the northern part (Dutch speaking part) of Belgium. De Lijn is thereby at the same time contracting authority as well as bus and tram operator. In 2006, De Lijn introduced The Quality Monitor, an integrated measurement tool which measures the strategic quality aspects and reports them in order to improve business processes and operations. The quality monitor measures customer satisfaction in 2 different ways:

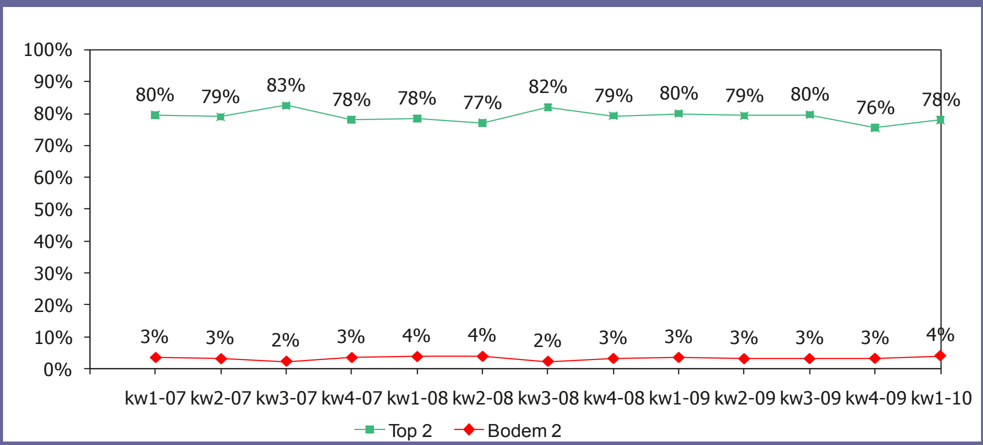
- Biennial customer satisfaction surveys: 3.600 in-depth face-to-face interviews at home concerning satisfaction over the last year;
- Continuous customer satisfaction surveys: on a yearly basis 90.000 paper and pencil questionnaires on board of the vehicles concerning satisfaction during the actual travel experience – data is collected all year round.

The first strives to be a strategic long term study, the second is the tactic short term complementary.

Since results are very detailed and linked to each operating level, at every level of management responsibility it creates opportunities to improve those service attributes that are most important and offer most room for improvement in specific (geographical) areas. This enables De Lijn to optimise effectiveness of its efforts and investments in terms of specific customer satisfaction features and to benchmark performances quarter by quarter.

The results of the quality monitor are aimed to be distributed throughout the organisation, to every driver, technician, employee. Every employee needs to be informed so that he/she can take action to improve customer service and/or the efficient allocation of means. A bottom-up and top-down information and action flow has been set up to create organisation-wide support and empowerment. In this information-action scheme, the roles of all parties involved are clearly defined; specifically team leaders, quality coordinators and market researchers, complementing the normal De Lijn decision making bodies and procedures.

Evolution of general satisfaction over the last quarters/years (continuous study).



A number of tools were developed to follow up on action proposals. One of the tools is a database, where all action proposals are listed, with a clear history of every step taken for this action, who is responsible, what was the result, etc. Thus allowing an update of all action proposals whenever anyone desires. Within the framework applicable for De Lijn, the quality monitor thus allows to set priorities for actions or projects at different management levels.

(baseline 2010: 84%), it is likely to be demoralising for the opposite reason – it suggests either that the achievement is unimportant or that the organisation is considered too inefficient to do any better. So the happy medium is to set 'stretch targets' which are indeed likely to be achievable but still pose a challenge to the current practices of your organisation.

The *relevance* of a target (or, more appropriately, of the objective behind the target) is a more relative concept than the previous SMART features. The first key question is to find out for whom an objective is relevant and the second issue is what is the meaning of 'relevance' in this context. Relevance is easier to define by what it is not, than by what it is. For instance, the target *to reduce the number of deaths from traffic accidents on national roads to 15% by December 2012* is not relevant for municipal police in some countries because they do not have authority over behaviour on national roads.

A relevant objective for an organisation or unit means that they can do at least something about it. Further, the degree of relevance increases for that unit or organisation if the objective is part of their core business. Finally, the relevance of objectives should be checked against the targeted beneficiaries of the measure by asking them or related stakeholders. For instance, *to reduce obesity among teenagers at schools by 50% within one year* may well not be seen as relevant for many of the obese teenagers if you ask them, but it is for their parents or health authorities or teachers because obesity has implications for health, health care costs, classroom behaviour, etc. So it is important to decide which stakeholders you most care about and then ask them about which objectives are most relevant to them.

Finally, a *timely* objective implies a clear timeframe of when it should start or when it should end. Most examples of targets given in this section include a date by which a specific value of a performance indicator relevant to an objective should be achieved.

3. What can I compare my results with?

The main benefit of customer satisfaction measurement is to uncover issues that can improve customer service, rather than producing indicators of performance. One question that often gets asked, however, is "x% of customers say they are satisfied with the service, but is this good or bad?" Benchmarking against other sources can help to answer this question. There are two possible ways to do this:

- Comparing over time with previous surveys about the same service
- Comparing with other surveys about other similar services.

A. Benchmarking internally over time

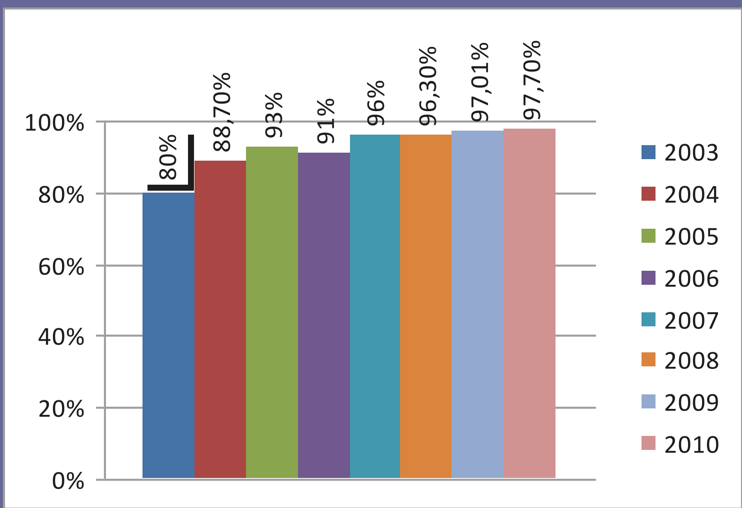
'Benchmarking' over time can be useful to see how a service or one aspect of a service has changed. The research method and key questions should remain the same to enable you to see if changes that had been implemented have resulted in improvements in customer perceptions. However, since the service will be continually under review, and changes will be made, decisions sometimes need to be made to let go of old questions and old data, and move on to measure new more relevant issues that reflect the current service. This kind of tracking requires regular surveys but it is important to find the right balance between collecting data so frequently that there is not enough time to action any change, and so infrequently that there are long periods when customer focus can be lost. The actual frequency will depend on the service in question and the length of time that it takes to implement change.

CASE THE TAX OFFICE OF RAWICZ (POLAND)

The modernization actions are monitored with the use of a number of independent mechanisms:

- the staff of the Customer Service Room constitute the first filter – it is their task to react to the needs and suggestions reported by Customers, and to convey the relevant information to their superiors,
- an employee has been appointed whose duty is to ensure efficient and effective operation of the Customer Service Room, in line with the Customer's requirements,
- regular measurements of the customers' satisfaction,
- a dialogue box for customers to submit comments and suggestions.

All information received is subject to an analysis and, depending on the current requirements, is reviewed during meetings of the Office's managerial staff, meetings between the management and the personnel, is made available on the website, at the seat of the Office, and is also presented during open-day campaigns organized for the taxpayers.
The level of the customers' satisfaction at the Rawicz Tax Office was clearly growing between 2003 and 2007 and then became stable during the period of 2008 – 2010.



B. Benchmarking with other services

Benchmarking across services is of value only if the services are comparable. Different services can rarely be compared easily because the nature of the service and the type of customers that use it will have a strong bearing on customer perceptions. In essence, there is always a risk of 'comparing apples with pears'. There are cases where comparison is possible, particularly with local services. For example, all police forces provide similar services and comparisons can usefully be made between forces. However, local services

CASE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE (HUNGARY)

As discussed in part 3 (see supra), the Hungarian National Employment Service has implemented *partner-oriented quality management programmes* at all levels of the organisation: in the local offices, in the regional centres and at national level. Due to the common methodology, the organisations and employees become comparable. This makes it possible for the Employment service to run an extensive and profound benchmarking practice based upon its organic quality management system. The overall aim of the benchmarking is not to publish rankings among the units, but to provide a systemic framework for each office to identify their own development (or slowdown).

The key indicators (e.g. average awaiting time, average handling time) are measured and monitored in a central system. The strategies on all levels use these evidences. Within the countrywide computerized database the service delivery entries (case handling time, queuing time, etc.) are interlinked with the results of the customer satisfaction measurements. However, the results so far show the deviation of the values concerning the service delivery throughout the country, the Service refuses to apply and set standards (or approximate values), for the reason that one should assess and interpret the parameters only together with the related satisfaction figures. This approach helps the Service to meet the diverging demands of the labour market in different segments of the country.

The database can be entered through a web-based intranet surface by each office at the local, county and national level, but with different access rights: each unit can only see the data of the subordinates. When recognizing extreme values, the superior initiates investigation on the spot to find out the reasons for lagging behind (resources, infrastructure, education, irregularity etc.). The coordinators accordingly connect these offices with the advanced counterparts in order to learn the good practices. The local offices which deliver the services are solely allowed to learn their own current and historic data.

The National Employment Service is determined to enable bottom-up initiatives, and renders substantial freedom for the local offices to identify key targets and development areas. Within the majority of the 170 local offices so-called quality circles have been implemented with the task of preparing action plans with indicators to reach. Upon the self-assessment questionnaire and the customer satisfaction inputs the organizational objectives are defined for short, medium and long term. For accomplishing the short term objectives quality circles are launched with a clear mandate to fulfil. These quality circles are mentored by the county level coordinators, and can be grouped into thematic workshops (with the aim of benchlearning) organized by the national level coordinators.

In the case of the National Employment Service customer satisfaction management proves to be a good tool for tackling with the challenges of the (geographically) different expectations and needs of the clientele (both employees' and employers' side). Therefore, it is not the standardization of service quality but the most customized service provision that the Service strives for.

Following the dissemination of the results, the offices/regions lagging behind in quality management are eager to cooperate with and learn from the good practice owners. This is also being fostered by the collection of good practices, which contains the theme-specific know-how and prescriptive recommendations.

respond to local circumstances and local demographics vary considerably. While there are analysis techniques available that can help control for these factors, the most useful comparisons can be made between areas which are demographically similar.

CASE OBSERVATORY OF QUALITY OF SERVICES (SPAIN)

The Observatory of Quality of Services is a department of AEVAL (Agency of Evaluation of Public Policies and Quality of Services), and independent governmental agency of the Ministry of Presidency.
The Observatory, through its Surveys on Public Perception of Public Services in Spain analyses citizen satisfaction with a wide range of public services, including some welfare policies managed by regional or local authorities. Moreover, the Observatory of Quality of Services belongs to the Group of Observatories, together with some regional Observatories and the Federation of Spanish Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP). This network promotes the exchange of initiatives, good practices and develop some joint projects on CSM and quality of services.
Thus, since 2006, the Observatory presents two annual reports: Monitoring Agencies Activities in the General Framework of Quality (sent to the Parliament) and Monitoring Ministries Activities in the General Framework of Quality (sent to the Council of Ministers).
Throughout this work during years 2007 and 2008, the Observatory detected the necessity for a unified instrument with full territorial representativeness which allows drawing legitimate comparisons on citizen satisfaction regarding decentralized public services (mainly Welfare services)

4. Communication

Effective communication is a crucial step in the process of ensuring that customer satisfaction measurement plays an active role in driving service improvement. Generally speaking the findings should be communicated to as wide an audience as possible.

This will certainly include the internal stakeholders identified, but will sometimes include customers and other external stakeholders as well. Ensuring there are no barriers to accessing research information is critical. The findings only have meaning and value if different stakeholders across the organisation are able to engage with and use them. Users need to be able to drill down to their own area of responsibility. Information sharing tools, such as intranets which can even pick up and analyse data, are helpful in allowing this to happen.

Sharing insights from customer satisfaction measurement with the people who deal with customers on a day to day basis creates the opportunity to improve services directly by encouraging them to act on the feedback they have gained. Customer facing staff will need feedback on the direct actions that they need to take to improve the customers' experience. For an organisation undertaking customer satisfaction research for the first time, a workshop, bringing together diverse stakeholders from across the organisation, can be invaluable at this stage. This allows the results of the research to be shared and the action plan to be jointly agreed - in terms of priorities for change in the short and medium term, and the allocation of responsibilities for pushing through the necessary actions. This can help a large organisation connect with its customers, listen to them and act on the results.

CASE MAZOWIECKIE PROVINCE OFFICE (POLAND)

The Mazowieckie Province Office in Warsaw, that provides services for entrepreneurs and citizens, uses various methods for collecting information on customers/citizens:

1. Quantitative research – conducted in accordance with the Computer Aided Telephone Interview (CATI) method – examines the quality of service in settling issues and giving information to the territorial self-government entities and NGOs;
2. The "Mysterious Client" research – conducted in accordance with the Computer Aided Telephone Interview (CATI) method – looks at the way individual customers are treated by secretariats and clerks who should to provide customers with information;
3. Poll research pertaining to customer satisfaction levels, carried out by individual Office Divisions;
4. Poll research pertaining to the Office employees' satisfaction;
5. Quarterly analysis of complaints, motions, and petitions submitted in individual secretariats of the Office Divisions.

As a result of conducted research, the Mazowieckie Province Office in Warsaw specified key satisfaction factors which determine the general level of customer satisfaction and influence the Office image:

1. The quality and clarity of information on where and how a given issue should be handled (this has led to particular attention of the organisation for electronic communication, e.g. website, social media, etc.);
2. The speed with which decisions are made;
3. Professional and kind attitude of staff;
4. Better, shorter and transparent procedures.

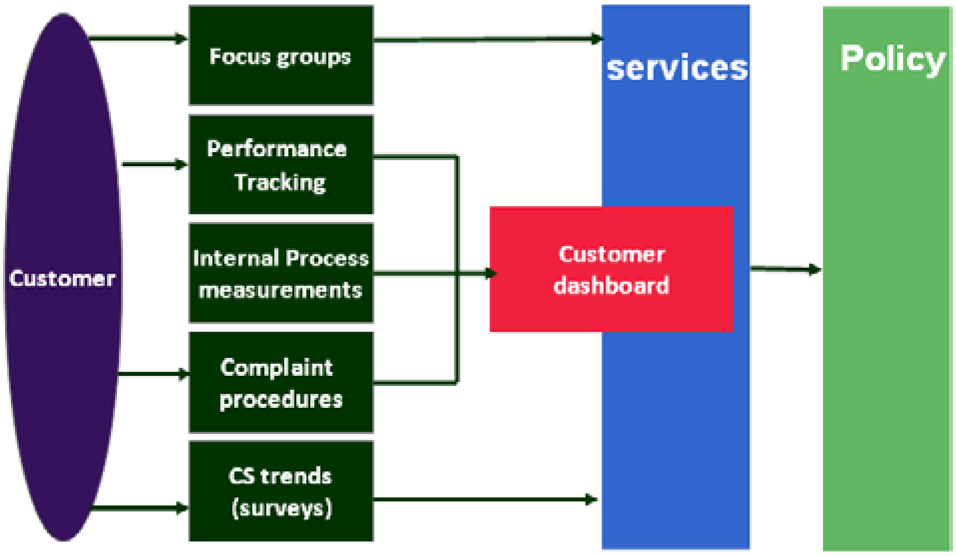
The research results are discussed at monthly meetings held by the Office managers.
Individual department directors – along with their subordinate managers – analyse various possibilities of making improvements and implementing remedial actions.
In addition, activities are taken up by the whole office (inter-departmental task teams). Organizational changes are being implemented, particularly with regard to additional information lines, human resources allocation, activation of additional customer service points, work time organization, etc.

One of the improvement actions was the preparation and implementation of standards for service provision towards customers (especially the multicultural ones). They consist of clear rules pertaining to: customer service priority, reliable information, individual approach to every client, respect, high regard for privacy, conscientiousness and reliability. The wording of the standards is divided into 3 parts: general provisions, customer rights and duties, employee rights and duties.

According to the general principle, the standards are monitored by the staff themselves and by their superiors. The standards have been drawn up as a set of rules concerning customer service at the Department of Foreigners. On the one hand, each employee is obliged to observe them at their work station – regardless of the position held and of who the customer is. On the other hand, the standards provide for the diverse character of customer relations. Annual standard reviews are planned. The reviews are aimed at adjusting the standards to the actual problems encountered while serving the customers, at eliminating the "dead" provisions, as well as at including those important aspects that have failed to be provided for so far. The next review is planned at the end of 2011.

Nor should communication to the customers themselves be forgotten. Having participated in the research, it is important to provide feedback on how the findings are being used and what this will mean for users of the service. The goal of service improvement can only be reached by involving customers throughout the cycle of service transformation, which necessarily requires their belief in the commitment of the organisation to taking action in response to their feedback.

Having employed the best possible research tools, and used a considered approach to analysing and interpreting the results, you should now have an idea of what the priorities are for changes to the service. Communication of the results up and down the organisation should have helped to develop these ideas into an action plan with which stakeholders are fully engaged. This process should have put the foundations in place for change, so all that remains is to put your plans into action. Once you have acted on the findings of the research, this completes the cycle of improving the customer experience. At the outset you reviewed fully what your service was, who your customers were, and what you already knew. You sought further information to help inform you about issues you needed to explore and provide context. You then designed a customer satisfaction survey suited to your needs that provided you with robust data, and interpreted this data in a way that produced in-depth actionable findings.



Communicating these findings to the organisation helped to produce a workable plan of action that was then implemented. The next step is to go right back to the start, review where you are now, and start a new cycle of research to assess the success of your interventions.

Culture

Cul·tu·re

/ˈkʌltʃə(r)/

Noun

1. the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at a particular time

Part 6: A changing culture

"Do we succeed in establishing a citizen/customer culture?"

At the hearth of user/citizen organisations is the deep believe that listing to citizens/users and securing a deep insight in the needs, expectations and values of different groups and segments of citizen/users can have an impact on the level of satisfaction, the performance of organisations and the relationship between citizen/users and public sector organisations in particular and government as a whole. Listening to citizen/users can be done in different ways as described in the previous parts of this guidelines. To summarize how this listening is done depends on the aims of organisations. What do we want to obtain in listening to citizen/users:[10]

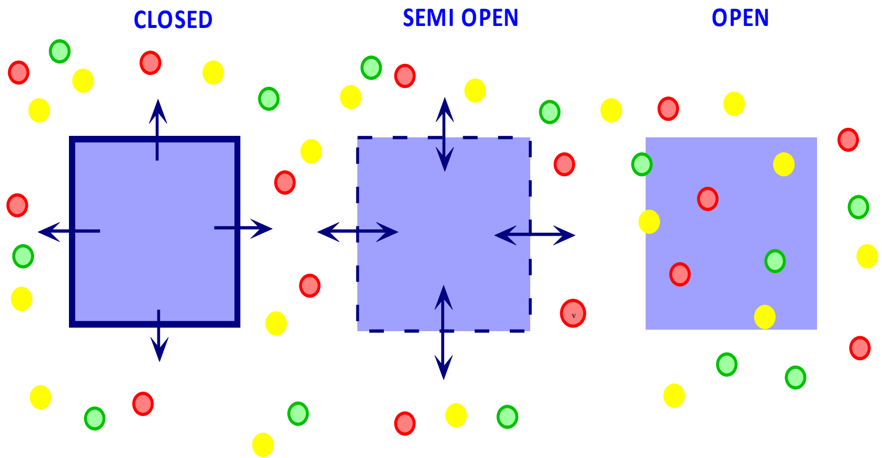
1. Do we want to have an objective picture of the level of their satisfaction, in order to set targets and measures to improve, to monitor the progress and report towards the (political) authorities?
2. Do we want to compare or benchmark our satisfaction results with organisations inside our outside our sector?
3. Do we want to have and insight and understanding of the psychology of the citizen/user (and different segments), by understanding the needs, expectations and experiences. The aim is to adopt our processes and service delivery accordingly?
4. Do we want to give citizen/users the feeling they are part of the organisation?
5. Do we want to increase the general citizen/user orientation in our organisation (at all levels)?
6. Do we want to "steer" the organisation and the staff towards the citizen/user orientation and make this an elopement of their personal tasks and targets?
7. Do we want to convince users of the good functioning of the organisation and decrease the number of complaints and dissatisfied users/customers?
8. Do we want to win (or win back) users?

A well elaborated listening "system" includes many different forms of listening in a continuous and permanent way in order to use this information for steering (managing) the organisation as elaborated in the previous chapters. Using this information in this way will demand a changing culture in organisations.

"Satisfying" users, customers and citizens is nowadays on the agenda of mostly all public sector organisations. There is a lot of pressure from the outside world. Citizens, politicians, media other public sector organisations, etc. In recent times many resources are dedicated to the issue. But few organisations are clear on their targets, their strategic aims concerning the issue of citizen/user satisfaction management. Therefore the issue risks to stay at the mechanical level as we already have stated before. Developing these instruments is (relatively) easy. It only demands a limited involvement from staff at the different levels of

[10] Thomassen J-P (2007), *De klantgerichte overheid (The customer oriented public sector)*, Kluwer, p.67.

the organisation. In many cases it is only a person or a limited team that is responsible for the topic in an organisation. The danger is that setting up these instruments becomes a goal in itself and that the use in and for the organisation is limited. This purely mechanical use of instruments is not enough to become a citizen/users driven organisation. The passionate, cultural shift is however necessary if public sector organisation wants to listen, involve and co-operate with citizen/users to have an impact on the long term performance of public sector organisations. If the culture of an organisation is not shifting from a purely internal, process and product driven approach towards a demand and citizen/user approach it doesn't change much. Instruments are in that case only serving internal purposes and the behaviour of staff and leaders towards citizen/users is not changing. Do organisations want to live up to the consequences of this citizen/user driven approach. This demands more than a voluntary behaviour towards the issue. Leaders need to be aware that the choice to become a citizen/user driven organisation demands training and coaching of staff, different ways of communicating inside, outside and towards the (political) authorities. It demands an approach from being an "inward looking (and acting) organisation" towards an "outward looking and acting organisation". Organisations need to move from introvert towards extrovert organisations, from being closed towards being open. In the past, many organisations were closed organisations. The voice of the citizen/users hardly entered into the organisation and the communication was one way. Structural contacts and research (not to say taking into account) into demands, needs and expectations was hardly done. Decisions (on service delivery, but also on policies) were taken from a purely internal perspective.

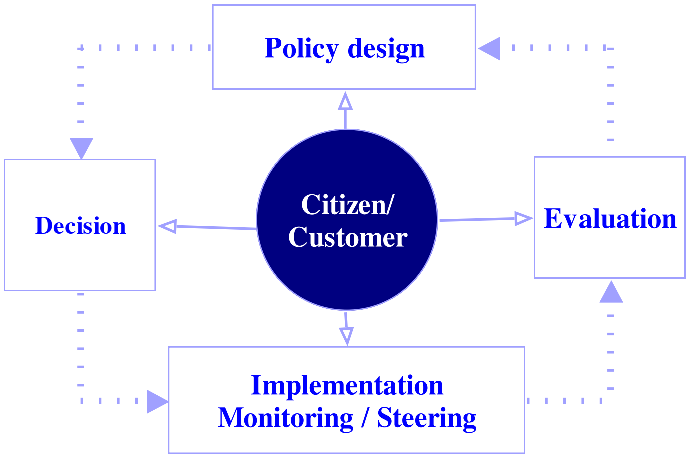


Many public sector organisations have done in the past years many (and in some cases spectacular) efforts to take down the thick walls around public sector organisations and the interaction with citizen/users became more frequent and more intense. The sense that getting an insight in the needs and expectations grow. Time and resources were dedicated to research, but as described before, in many cases at the instrumental level.

If organisations want to develop towards open organisations, the relation with the citizen/user needs to be intensified and evolving towards a "co-approach".
Traditionally, the political leaders determine what services are to be provided, on what terms and to whom; and bureaucrats and professionals subsequently organise and deliver the services. The role of the citizens is largely passive. In the new setting however, the range of actors involved – institutionally or on an *ad hoc* basis – in the production, delivery and evaluation of public services has grown and the role of the citizen has become more and more active. This changing role of citizen/customers of public services has an impact on the policy and management cycle as a whole. Traditionally, the policy and management cycle is

dominated and controlled by politicians and administrators. Now, citizens-customers are increasingly involved in this policy and management cycle at different stages (design, decision, implementation and monitoring, and evaluation) as is shown in the figure below.

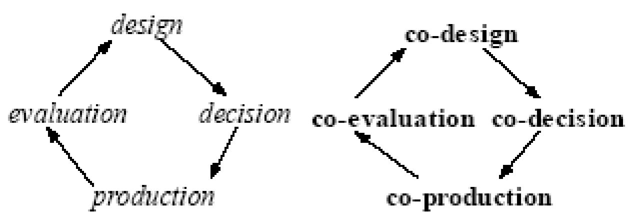
Successful organisations use customer needs and expectations as a starting point; developing proposals around their customers' needs and expectations, also meeting other corporate imperatives. Managing satisfaction therefore has to do with managing services and/or products, but also with managing expectations and perceptions of the citizen/customer, as described before. Measuring satisfaction seems to be just one element in this overall satisfaction management approach.



The consultation of citizens forms a crucial input throughout the policy and management cycle. The OECD defines consultation as a two-way relationship, where government talks to citizens/customers and citizens/customers provide feedback to government. It is based on the prior definition by government of the issue on which citizens'/customers' views are being sought and requires the provision of information (OECD, 2001b). The citizen/customer no longer comes in the picture only at the end, but at all stages and steps of the policy and service delivery. Therefore, measuring citizen/customer satisfaction is only one stage, the final stage. The input of the citizens/customers in all their roles and at all stages of the cycle has to be taken into account. This is what can be defined as Customer Satisfaction Management.

Strategies of participation and knowledge on needs and performance are essential. This implies that public agencies evolve from a closed, self-centred service provider to an open networking organisation which the public can trust. This occurs through transparent processes and accountability; through democratic dialogue from an internal (resources and activities) focus to an external (output and outcome) focus; and from a classical-design-decision-production-evaluation cycle to an involvement of stakeholders in general, and citizens (as customers) in particular at each and every stage of this cycle. Citizens/customers become co-designers, co-deciders, co-producers and co-evaluators. Different ways, tools and techniques in doing this are presented, illustrated and discussed before in this publication.

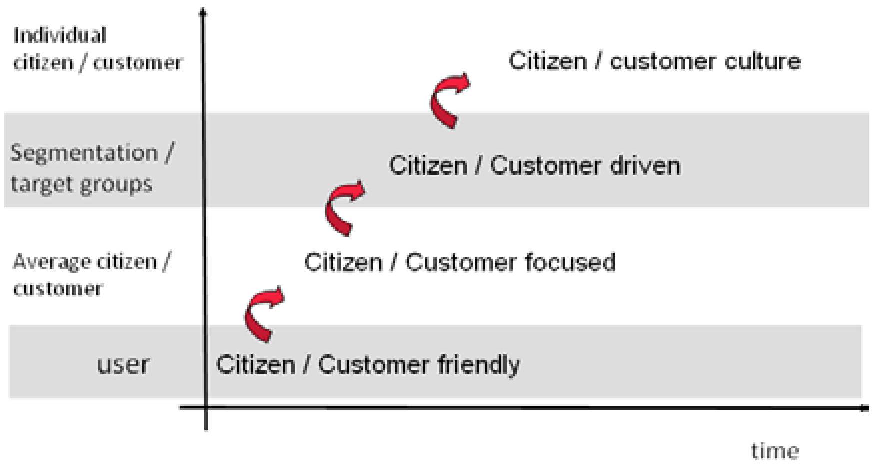
The traditional orientation in the public sector is in principle very internal and supply-driven. Public sector organisations are closed systems, or even 'black boxes', where the design of policies and service delivery, the related decisions taken, the production and delivery of services, and the evaluation by definition, all depend upon internal relationships. There were several reasons why this appeared to be a good solution. Legal requirements emphasised equal, impartial treatment of citizens. Only a distant approach was supposed to guarantee this. Furthermore,



professionals and experts/bureaucrats had the necessary expertise about needs, priorities, resources and policies that could remedy certain problems. However, complex needs in an increasingly heterogeneous society, the demand for increased transparency, changing perceptions of the legitimacy of governments, and the need to get citizens involved resulted in an opening up of the 'black box' to citizens.
Increasingly, public agencies turn into externally oriented and demand driven organisations, developing new types of interactions and relationships with a variety of stakeholders for different sets of tasks.
An issue of fundamental importance to the sustainability of quality improvement is the level of involvement of other stakeholders, particularly service users and citizens, during the entire cycle of service.[11]

If organisations develop this "co-approach" in a systematic and continuous way they must be able to grow gradually towards an organisation with a citizen/customer culture. This culture does not comes from one day to another.

Organisations starting to work on a citizen/customer approach, services, products and process are the driving issues. The organisation defines it as its task to deliver qualitatively good products and services. Quality means in this perspective to comply with the internally (legally) defined norms, standards and targets. Staff is asked to behave and act in a "customer" friendly manner. This is the traditional user perspective.
More "*citizen/customer focussed*" organisations start to have an interaction with citizen/customers. This is a classic example of what we called above "semi-open" organisations. These organisations try to have an insight in the needs and expectations of the general, average citizen/customer. Based upon this insight the organisation organises its processes and service delivery. Quality is in this cases related to satisfying needs and expectations of citizen/users. Satisfaction will be for these organisations an important target and objective.



As described earlier in this publication, "*the*" average citizen/user does not exists. "*Citizen/customer driven*" organisations want to have a deeper insight in the different groups of citizen/users (in a previous chapter we called this the classical segments – age, gender, educational background…). The organisation adapts its functioning towards the expectations and needs of these different target groups.

An organisation which has a "*fully integrated citizen / customer culture*" starts from the individual citizen / customer. Many efforts are done to get a deep insight in the

[11] For a more detailed description we refer to N. Thijs & P. Staes, *European Primer in Customer Satisfaction Management, EIPA, Maastricht, 100 p.*

characteristics of the demands and expectations and the key drivers of satisfaction. This demands a well elaborated form of segmentation, in-depth research on the key drivers and an organisational culture where the organisation wants to offer “tailor-made” service towards the citizen/customer.