

Connecting Customer Experience to Employee Engagement



RESEARCH BRIEF

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Stefan Captijn

Senior Director of Product Marketing, Genesys

Executive Summary

A growing body of research shows that, regardless of industry, an engaged workforce leads to a better customer experience. For government, a better customer experience is especially important, as citizens increasingly expect the same level of services from agencies as their private-sector counterparts.

The good news is that government employees seem relatively engaged. In fact, the latest Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey shows 65 percent engagement in the government workforce, the highest since 2012. The bad news, however, is that citizen satisfaction with government services appears to be at an all-time low. According to a recent Gallup survey, government is significantly behind the private sector in terms of customer service ratings.

How can these differing narratives be reconciled? GovLoop and Genesys, an omnichannel customer experience solutions provider, conducted a survey of 642 government employees to find out their views about customer service and employee engagement, including frontline customer service employees (See Figure 1). Experts Jodi M. Thompson, Senior Principal Business Consultant for Strategic Business Consulting, and Stefan Captijn, Senior Director of Product Marketing at Genesys, helped highlight the important findings of the survey and the connection between employee engagement and customer experience.

According to the recent survey, employee engagement and the customer service experience are directly correlated and more important for government to think about than ever before. In fact, 93 percent of survey respondents said that they see improved internal employee engagement as a key factor to improving customer experiences and engagement (See Figure 2).

In order to strengthen both areas, government needs to explore training, technological solutions and consulting services that make it easier for employees to do their jobs while simultaneously delivering better services to citizens.

This research brief addresses how to bridge the gap between relatively engaged employees and unsatisfied citizens. It also offers tips and solutions to help agencies increase employee engagement levels while driving good customer experiences.

FIGURE 1
What level are you at your agency?

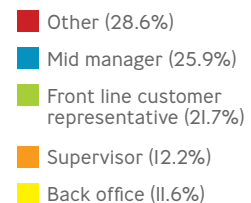
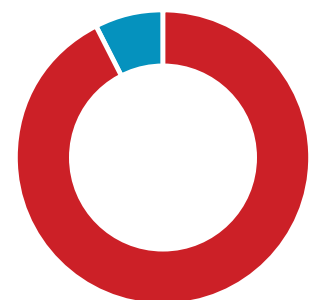


FIGURE 2
Do you see improved internal employee engagement as a key factor in improving your customer experience & engagement?



The Connection Between Engaged Employees & Satisfied Citizens

As agency leaders look to increase efficiency and promote better services at their organizations, it's becoming abundantly clear that employee engagement is critical for success in these areas. After all, employees are the face of your agency. More than 75 percent of survey respondents said they directly interact with citizens in their roles (See Figure 3).

In order to better manage the government workforce, the idea of employee engagement has evolved. Organizations have shifted away from getting the most productivity out of employees, and the idea of making workers content, and are now moving towards getting the best out of every individual within an organization.

More specifically, employee engagement is becoming centered on driving the business mission of an organization. Employees who are engaged and see the value in their jobs are more likely to deliver better services and drive the agency's mission more efficiently and effectively.

Genesys thinks about defining employee engagement in terms of providing the technologies to enable employees to be more efficient, optimizing the workforce, ensuring work is divided equally and workloads are balanced across skillsets.

"Employee engagement is a collection of all the best practices, tools, information and processes to get employees to perform the best possible business outcomes," Captijn said.

Fortunately, employee engagement seems to be at robust levels in government. According to the GovLoop survey results, 62 percent of respondents said they feel "really engaged" at

their jobs as they serve customers (See Figure 4). The survey results support the general trend that on average, employees are engaged in government. This could be due to the fact that more discussion is centered on the need to improve customer service from government and, therefore, improve employee motivation.

"There's no longer a focus on processes and productivity but more on training and coaching employees," Captijn said. These efforts are proving vital to retaining government talent and fostering better employee engagement.

These figures, however, don't paint the whole picture. While research and our survey showed relatively engaged employees, increased public scrutiny and dissatisfaction with government as well as changing administrations can and have negatively affected employee morale. This is why government has made more concentrated efforts to retain talent. Many agencies have cited recruiting and retaining talent as their most critical workforce issue.

FIGURE 3
Do you work in a role where you interact with citizens who need to use your services?

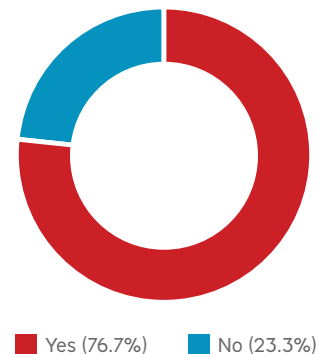


FIGURE 4
How would you describe your personal employee engagement as you serve customers?



“When employees are fulfilled on the individual level and in their day-to-day work, they have more of a sense of purpose.”

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Such facts only strengthen the case for the need to enhance employee engagement. To address low morale and keep government personnel engaged, survey respondents felt that better training and coaching would best impact employee engagement at their agency (29.6 percent), followed closely by recognition in the workplace (25.4 percent) (See Figure 5).

While many agencies already have training and coaching initiatives in place, rethinking how these programs are run can increase engagement levels even more. Captijn and Thompson recommend focusing on more individualized training and coaching rather than “blanket” approaches.

Since government cannot always compete with the private sector in terms of employee compensation, recognition is another important method for government to keep personnel motivated.

“For recognition, since government can’t always give monetary value, they can give verbal and visual recognition,” Thompson said. “Agencies can implement leadership boards, interactives and friendly competitions, and create more opportunities for the executive leadership to come into contact with frontline employees and do things like give out awards and shake hands.”

The key connection between employee engagement and a good citizen experience is that engaged and motivated employees make satisfied customers. Survey respondents agreed, with 43 percent citing loyalty and satisfaction of both public agents and citizens, and 14 percent citing a better citizen experience as the top benefits to better employee engagement (See Figure 6).

When employees feel they are contributing to government’s mission of serving the nation, they tend to perform better knowing they’re public servants rather than clock-punchers.

Having intrinsically motivated employees who are attached to the long-term goals of the agency makes it more likely that they will be invested in cultivating and sustaining relationships with the citizens they serve. “When employees are fulfilled on the individual level and in their day-to-day work, they have more of a sense of purpose,” Captijn said.

The best customer experiences come from agents who are polite and cheerful, able to empathize and understand the customer and demonstrate clear effort to be as informative as possible while satisfying the needs of that customer. At the end of the day, it’s about the connection between two people: the citizen and the government employee providing a service. When employees are motivated, not only are they more productive and efficient in their work, they’re also emotionally invested in the personal connections to citizens.

FIGURE 5
Which element do you feel would best impact employee engagement at your agency?

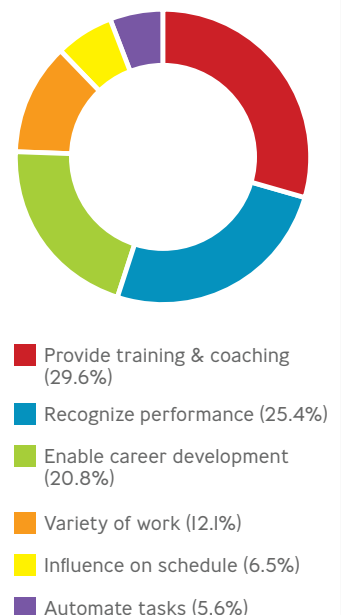
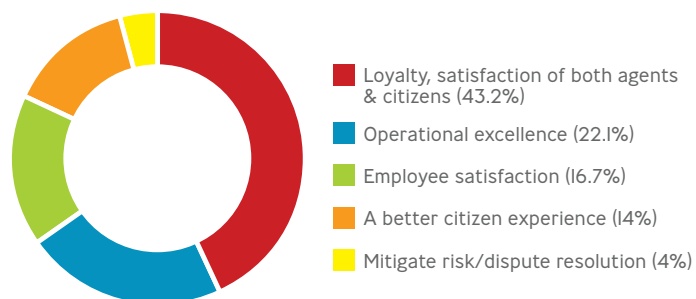


FIGURE 6
What is the top benefit you see for better employee engagement?



The Disconnect Between Employee and Citizens' Perception of Services

It's clear that government employees understand the importance of good customer service and that employee engagement is central to providing high-quality services. Yet, while 55 percent of respondents said they think their department offers a quality customer experience to the citizens that they serve (See Figure 7), recent research shows that trust in the government is at an all-time low. In fact, the Pew Research Center's recent survey showed that just 19 percent of Americans trust the federal government all or most of the time. This means there's a clear disconnect between employee perception of services and citizens' satisfaction with government services.

Additionally, while the majority of government respondents did feel that they provided quality service, 45 percent said that the experiences they provided were either not good or needed improvement (See Figure 7). This means different agencies might be providing different levels of service.

Such inconsistencies and negative customer experiences can be explained through an example in the private sector. What customers define as a good experience is directly related to how an organization looks and acts across customer service channels such as website portals, in-person venues and call lines. When the experience is inconsistent, the consumer's perception of the company declines, willingness to interact decreases and loyalty takes a nose dive.

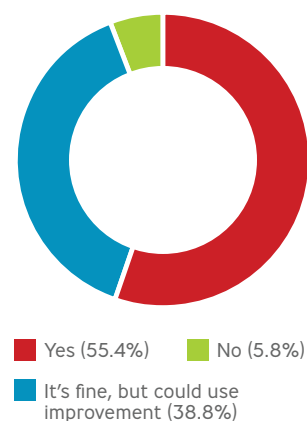
The same can be true for government. For example, a citizen who just moved wants to check on the status of her new license plates. She calls one department to check on the status of her registration only to be put on hold for a long time. She is then told she

needs to come to the department in person. When she arrives, however, the same person she spoke to on the phone is not available. Another person tries to handle her request without knowledge of her previous contact with the agency, which leads to inconsistent information and an unsatisfied citizen, frustrated with the "incompetence" and "bureaucracy" of government.

Captijn and Thompson attribute the disconnect between perception of good services and the reality of poor services to different individuals and capacities of departments. "Some agencies are simply performing better than others in terms of customer service because they have better training and technology," Thompson said.

To address the gap in service delivery and bridge the disconnect between government and citizens, more agencies need to adopt better technologies and consistent practices. This will help empower employees so they can deliver better and more consistent services to their citizens.

FIGURE 7
Do you think the customer experience your department offers to citizens is a quality one?



Solutions to Improve Employee Engagement & Customer Experience

To address the disconnect, agencies need to simultaneously address their employee engagement needs as well as customer service. For improved employee engagement, Thompson and Captijn recommend journey mapping for citizens as well as shifting Key Performance Indicator (KPI) metrics to more individualized government employee interactions with citizens. As for improving customer service, they recommend technology solutions like omnichannel desktops and proactive outbound notifications that can help employees better track citizen requests while staying on top of frequent inquiries.

Agency leadership can start by making it easier for employees to determine how they performed when serving citizens. One way to do this is by aligning job functions with the customer journey. “We want to look at whether a given employee satisfied the request or not, not drive measures around productivity,” Thompson said.

Journey maps – which enable employees to track interactions with customers while letting customers track the status of their inquiries – can help agency leaders measure individual employee engagement and performance over productivity. Journey maps shift customer service-related goals from productivity to whether customer requests are satisfied. They also ensure employees are performing on a level to help achieve those goals, while improving visibility of government processes for citizens.

Another way to ensure employees are delivering better customer experiences is by identifying and monitoring KPIs. These are quantifiable measures used to evaluate

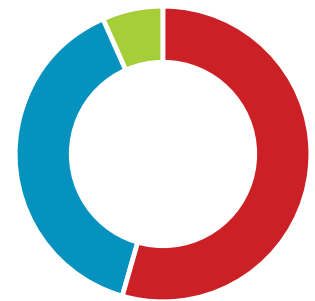
the success of an organization through an employee’s performance. For example, an agency might measure a KPI by the number of citizen requests fulfilled per month or the number of interactions it took to address a citizen’s inquiry over the span of a week. In order to alleviate the disconnect between employee engagement and customer satisfaction, Thompson and Captijn recommend having KPI metrics focus more on self-service opportunities for citizens and individual interactions, rather than how many phone calls or productivity outputs occur in a certain amount of time.

While such tactics help address the employee engagement part of the equation, one of the biggest challenges for better customer service is managing individual interactions with citizens. Often, agency personnel simply lack the resources to adequately handle the massive amount of incoming requests from citizens on a day-to-day basis. In fact, nearly 46 percent of survey respondents struggle with or think there is room for improvement in how government agencies handle the large volume of calls they receive and how they interact with citizens seeking services (See Figure 8).

Based on the survey results, most government employees agree that technological innovation is the way to improve employee engagement and customer experience. When asked, “What ways do you think the citizen experience could be improved?” the most overwhelming response (64 percent) was through “better technology and data to empower frontline employees with better decision-making information,” (See Figure 9).

FIGURE 8

Are you able to deal with the volume of calls & citizen interactions your agency receives satisfactorily?



■ Yes (54.5%) ■ No (6.6%)
■ Usually, but there's room for improvement (38.9%)

FIGURE 9

What ways do you think the citizen experience could be improved? (Check all that apply)

Better technology & data to empower frontline employees with better decision making information (63.3%)

Better training for frontline employees (55.6%)

More channels on which to interact with citizens beyond phone (42.4%)

Increase of citizen self-service ability to reduce interactions with your employees (34.4%)

By working to integrate technology into the daily lives of frontline employees and redefining what metrics are collected, agencies can begin to help employees stay motivated to improve service delivery.

These consulting services and tools from Genesys can help:

Journey Mapping and the Omnichannel Desktop

Genesys offers consulting services for journey mapping that allow agencies to connect each interaction with customers across channels and touchpoints for a consistent, personalized journey. This adds context so that customers do not have to repeat information and are matched with the appropriate person to help them with their issue the first time they come into contact with an agency. By supporting a customer at each step, across any channel the customer chooses, journey mapping allows government employees to feel more impactful while enhancing the citizen experience.

Tools like Genesys' Omnichannel Desktop can help significantly in a successful journey-mapping initiative. This tool provides teams within government organizations a single platform that has all of the context and knowledge needed to serve customers across every communication channel.

Additionally, an Omnichannel Desktop can guide employees during customer interactions to improve service quality, ensure compliance and meet organization goals. Such a desktop can optimize front- and back-office workforce efficiency by using business rules that analyze priorities and deliver the right work items to the right subject-matter experts in a timely manner.

Proactive Customer Care and Proactive Outbound Notifications

Too often, agency personnel are simply reacting to a citizen's request. Instead, agencies should invest in solutions that keep relevant information readily available to staff so they can quickly address a concern such as an FAQ. Consulting services like Genesys' Proactive Customer Care offers proactive strategies that support customers with relevant and timely information like appointment confirmation, satisfaction surveys, fraud alerts, service outage notifications and payment reminders. The package allows agencies to blend outbound communications across channels and turn contact centers into interaction centers that enable a more satisfactory customer experience.

Proactive Outbound Communications provides timely, personalized communications across channels, allowing agencies to maintain compliance and improve customer satisfaction. Instead of making citizens come to the agency for information and updates, agencies can reach customers at the right time on their preferred channel.

More specifically, agencies can keep citizens better informed by sending timely and personalized alerts, notifications, confirmations and even reminders over preferred channels like texts or phone calls. For example, imagine a local agency being able to text weather alerts and other emergency updates to citizens right to their smart devices, rather than making citizens have to search the agency's website for relevant information.

By combining the right technology solutions to improve customer service delivery with training and employee recognition to improve employee engagement, agencies can create the perfect recipe for efficient services and a satisfied workforce and constituent base.



CASE STUDY:

Building Experiences in Avondale, Arizona

The city of Avondale, Ariz., is one example of government employing these solutions to reduce the disconnect between employee engagement and customer experience. Confronted with consistently increasing call volumes, Avondale was struggling to maintain a high level of customer service.

However, the city did not want to eliminate calling as an option for citizens, or neglect that service in favor of other digital portals. Instead, the city wanted to maintain and improve its calling service with an interactive voice response (IVR) platform solution.

Its ideal service would address growing call volumes, improve access to family assistance resources and reduce utility disconnects. As a result, city officials sought out a platform-as-a-service solution to meet its voice and call-handling needs. The solution needed to be flexible enough to handle a heavy call load but robust enough to deliver on current and future needs.

Using Genesys cloud-based inbound and outbound IVR solutions helped the city build a consolidated IVR platform in less than 90 days. The platform was designed to support a range of services and enable more self-service resolutions.

Since the platform was implemented, a Family Assistance inbound IVR helps manage and prioritize constituent call loads in the Neighborhood and Family Services Department. Additionally, the Utilities Disconnect Notification outbound IVR provides status updates and allows callers to make immediate payments or set up payment plans that avoid service disconnects. The

city's customer service staff also built an outbound IVR service to provide garbage pick-up reminders that ensure citizens and businesses know when pick-ups will occur around holidays.

Finally, to ensure that the IVR line doesn't dissuade other forms of citizen communication with the city, the Genesys platform syncs with other portals to create real-time updates across all touchpoints. That means citizens can access the city's government by whatever means they find most comfortable, and still get the same, reliable information. That's the goal of the omnichannel approach to citizen experience.

"The key is to ensure you aren't creating siloed solutions," Thompson said. "Genesys enables agencies and departments to say how they want to design their experience and then gives them the tools to do it. We will connect everything. We'll leverage your current investments, like your customer relationship management system of record. But we can be the system of engagement that goes from one touchpoint to another across all these channels."

Avondale's efforts increased citizen satisfaction and reduced the strain on call centers, allowing employees to do their jobs more effectively and efficiently. Additionally, the efforts increased employee engagement by offering them the tools and information they need to quickly anticipate and serve citizens needs and effectively do their jobs.

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Jodi M. Thompson

Senior Principal Business
Consultant for Strategic
Business Consulting, Genesys

Conclusion

The equation is simple: Engaged employees equals satisfied customers. While research shows that most government employees are relatively engaged, there seems to be a disconnect between the perception of customer services and citizen satisfaction with government.

To bridge this disconnect, agencies can invest in improving employee engagement with individualized training and increased recognition of performance. To help employees deliver better customer experiences, agencies need to invest in customer journey mapping and omnichannel desktops to help staffs keep track of citizen requests and improve visibility of processes. Proactive Customer Care and Proactive Outbound Notifications can help agencies deliver needed information right to citizens without creating extra work for employees or citizens.

Genesys provides a number of consultation services and tools to help with the customer journey and interactions with an agency so that organizations can keep their employees motivated while better serving the public.



About Genesys

Genesys® powers more than 25 billion of the world's best customer experiences each year. We put the customer at the center of everything we do and passionately believe that great customer engagement drives great business outcomes. More than 10,000 companies in over 100 countries trust the industry's #1 customer experience platform to orchestrate seamless omnichannel customer journeys and build lasting relationships. With a strong track record of innovation and a never-ending desire to be first, Genesys is the only company recognized by top industry analysts as a leader in both cloud and on-premise customer engagement solutions.



About GovLoop

GovLoop's mission is to "connect government to improve government." We aim to inspire public-sector professionals by serving as the knowledge network for government. GovLoop connects more than 250,000 members, fostering cross-government collaboration, solving common problems and advancing government careers. GovLoop is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with a team of dedicated professionals who share a commitment to connect and improve government.

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