

Today's Government Customer Support

Who are we?

We're the people who deliver information, services, and support at the front lines of Government. There are many tens of thousands of us -- dedicated military, civilian, and contract employee professionals who staff, operate, and facilitate call centers, help desks, web sites, and other customer access channels across all levels of Government. Through our help desks and other internal touch points, we collectively enhance the productivity, reliability, and efficiency of both citizens and Government employees. Through our call centers, web portals, and other citizen contact channels, we create service quality and customer satisfaction while also serving as the visible return on investment for the approximately ninety days the average American works to pay for Government services each year. What all this adds up to is *strategic value* to every citizen, who is both our customer and our "stockholder." We are literally the "face of Government" to citizens and the face of their employer to Government's workforce!

Where is Government customer support today?

While historically we've been envisioned in terms of long lines and ponderous service practices, today we're turning the corner into the 21st Century more in step with industry as the expectations of the citizen based on service experiences in the private sector are rightfully being extrapolated to us! Over the past few years we've pulled essentially even with the private sector in American Customer Satisfaction Index results, due in part to a lagging economy. As the economy improves, however, we will be increasingly challenged to "keep up" as industry again turns to increasingly progressive efforts to push the cutting edge of customer support to higher levels of effectiveness. This will be a tremendous challenge, but we will be supported in our efforts by today's unprecedented levels of attention to the effectiveness of customer support in the public sector as evaluated by the customers!

What's needed to make and keep us responsive to our customers?

Many of the key necessary trends are already underway. Government is evolving from a culture of agency "stovepipes" to one of interoperability between both systems and cultures, both across and between the state, Federal, and local levels. Our culture is also focusing more on end results which impact customers rather than internal processes, milestones and accomplishments which are usually transparent to them. Perhaps most importantly, we're addressing our cultural and generational issues, and creating a more empowering environment at the front lines, which are the true keys to meeting customer needs and expectations.

What's the bottom line?

We have a massive, challenging future mission to meet, but lots of exciting things now

happening to point us in the right direction to meet it. Our future success will lie in the sharing of ideas and practices as we bridge the gaps between agencies and levels through networking to effectively evolve and optimize our services, which collectively impact *everyone!*

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