

Leading the Agenda in August 'Wrap Up'
Digitally Transforming the Delivery of Customer Service in the Local Government Sector
<https://www.vlga.org.au/resources/videos-webinars/leading-agenda-in-august>

Presented in partnership with *Leading the Agenda* sponsors Pitcher Partners on Friday 16 August 2019

Moderated by Chris Eddy, the panel included: Rebecca McKenzie - Chief Executive Officer at the City of Glen Eira; Fergal Coleman, Director - Symphony3; Darren Whitelaw - Chief Customer Officer at Service Victoria and Sudha Viswanathan - Director of Analytics & Insights Pitcher Partners.

Chris Eddy asked each panellist questions then opened to the participants for Q & A.

Rebecca McKenzie

Three years ago, Glen Eira was looking for what would take them from being a good council to being great in terms of their relationships with residents, staff and customer service. They decided on a program of activity: [Transforming Glen Huntly Together](#), which has four key platforms:

1. People
2. Places
3. Digital by default
4. Customer first

Glen Eira sought to focus on customer service and customer engagement, and strip out wastage, as they didn't want to digitise inefficient or ineffective practices. There were conversations with staff and the community about what council did well and how it could improve. There was an appetite for change. They did not want to design a perfect system, but rather be experimental and build on successes. The process was led by staff and the organisation, not consultants. Staff capacity was supported, so they were enacting transformational change, rather than having it "done to them". Council found that a technical expert was not required to lead digital transformation.

Glen Eira council was recognised recently with an [LGPro Award for Excellence](#): winner of the Innovative Management Initiative award for its *imagination@work* program to develop a culture among staff of process improvement and change. This worked to reduce waste, increase efficiency and improve customer service. Council's top 40 transactions were digitised to reduce waste and increase responsiveness (126 days reduced to 11 days).

Darren Whitelaw

Service Victoria is a state government department dedicated to customer service. They are using digital channels to transform customer experience, based on research. They asked the questions: What do you want from government? How do you want to interact? How important is government for your life? 3,000 Victorians have responded.

Insights from this research: 2/3 Victorians want to do more of their interaction with government online, but these services are not currently available. These people don't want to stand in a queue or wait on the phone. However, "the analogue divide" does exist: 19% of customers want to speak to a human being. Fortuitously, allowing those customers who want digital service to have it reduces wait times for those who want to speak to someone.

Government overestimates its importance in people's lives. People want the services, but not a deep relationship!

Even people who do not have internet at home have mobile access. It's important not to generalise; for example, it's not the case that no older people can use technology, or all young people can use technology. Age, gender and location divides don't exist.

Service Victoria has developed 10 persona types to help them design services. They are a young organisation. Their first public release was in 2017. Just served their 500,000th customer. There are more than 15,000 transactions in the state government catalogue, for example, digital fishing licences, SMS reminders, Working with Children checks.

Thinking big, starting small and learning quickly.

Things like pet registrations are the same in every council, and therefore ripe for regional or sector collaboration.

Fergal Coleman

Is "the single customer view" possible in local government?

The customer can't be central to council services if the system is property-centric. People want to have one log-in to council to see all their transactions. This requires a customer view.

Digital transformation requires an understanding of all the touchpoints each individual has with council: rates, maternal health, libraries, etc. These services have to be tied to the same person, and should include tenants, not just rate payers. A name and address register is not a CRM.

Three layers are required to develop a dynamic in local government:

1. A simple interface – customer can easily access a simple interface that is available 24/7 on any device to access council services.
2. Integration – connected systems. Your IT needs to be like Lego blocks - it should be easy to plug and play systems using modern APIs. (Top tip: Never buy another system unless it has a modern API (Application Interface), and make sure the vendor has no hidden costs to use it.) Integration is done using a tool called middleware, which is like the glue that connects your system.
3. Information – coordinate your information. Build a single source of the truth for your core information types: People, Property, Assets.

All three will ensure you deliver end to end services - as an example this will allow a resident to update their contact details once on their mobile, and this flows through to all systems and services.

The CEO is the person to drive this change, by coordinating information, people, place, documents. The CEO provides "a single source of truth", because s/he has a holistic view of council services.

Sudha Viswanathan

A common challenge is the disconnect between the technology and customer arms of an organisation. Small proofs of concepts are required to show the value of change and gain momentum.

What does it mean to be data-driven?

Mapping out the customer journey and therefore being able to predict customer needs.

Staff are often constrained by technology, their innovation inhibited.

Trust and confidence can be damaged when customer service is compromised.

Councils need to identify customer “pain points” and address them.

Can local government collaborate better? Or are shared services a holy grail, unachievable?

It is vital to build re-useable assets and projects. Many customer problems are the same across councils.

Customers want privacy and security, and easy, fast services. The key is to engage in data-sharing with customer consent.

Shared standards need to be in place before shared services: e.g. chart of accounts, service catalogue (same names for services, same groupings). A significant mind shift is required to overcome bureaucracy.

Shared services vs collaboration: the former is a vendor-client relationship; the latter is a partnership.

Do we need another term for cross-border collaboration in LG?

We are yet to see a successful shared services model in Victoria. The state government is investing in Rural Councils Fund, for example – some success to come.

Lego analogy: 150 services are provided by councils. 50-80% of these can be shared.

Q & A

Q: Is there a state government focus on sharing services between departments?

- There are 534 state government websites, not including education or local government! Service Victoria is undertaking a Single Digital Presence Project: infrastructure in the cloud.

Q: How can a council like City of Yarra focus on customer not property, when resident turnover is so high?

- Tenants without pets may not be captured in any council database, unless they get a parking fine!
- The customer experience can be improved by treating the customer the way they want to be treated. An “arms race” is going on in the private sector. Government is struggling to keep up.
- If councils put pdf forms online and the system is integrated, they can cut out customer service and go straight to an engineer; or send directly to records management and finance.
- Remember that councils deliver services that private companies wouldn't deliver, because they don't make money. There are also services councils are obligated to deliver.
- The end to end process at councils is very elongated: a customer has contact with many people/departments to deal with one service. This process could be much more efficient.
- Via an end to end service review of culture and customer interface, the number of applications resolved within 60 days in July 2019 at Glen Eira was 98%.
- The best we can do is poke holes in silos, we can't break them down.

- The argument for change can be made through *service safaris*. Take managers out into the field to hear customer experience first-hand.

Q: “Cultural nudges”?

- Change needs to come from the top, from the key leader in an organisation. If s/he builds an accountability thread which cascades through KPIs and celebrates change, change will occur.
- Service Victoria have no offices. The execs sit on floor with other staff.
- Bring cross-functional teams together to work on problems. They own and lead the change. Consultants can only influence the early adopters.
- The CEO is the one who can convert a cultural nudge to a cultural stick.

Q: How can we protect the unique culture and character of each council and its community?

- That’s the DNA, the what and the why. Technology is the how, and just one part. IT doesn’t run the organisation; they enable the business.
- There’s a difference between being risk-averse and risk-aware. We need to make mistakes.

Q: Off-the-shelf versus bespoke digital products?

- Rent rather than buy, certainly before build.
- Look at what’s out there. There are some things you don’t want to compromise on.
- Building and maintaining bespoke systems is really expensive. Legacy systems don’t get updated. And there are fewer and fewer staff who know how these systems work.

END

Leading the Agenda in September

Please join the VLGA, Pitcher Partners & ECCV for our next Leading the Agenda:
Addressing Systemic Barriers to Engagement in Council Consultation

Thursday 19 September

6pm to 8pm

Pitcher Partners

Level 13, 664 Collins Street Docklands

Moderated by **Ross Barnett**, Multicultural & Aboriginal Strategic Planner, City of Whittlesea, the panel includes:

Sheena Watt, Executive Manager – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Programs, AFL SportsReady

Mehak Sheikh, Founder, U-Learn Life Skills and Emotional Intelligence Workshops

Lilian Topic, Secretary Legal & Social Issues Committee, Department of the Legislative Council, Parliament of Victoria

A light supper will be provided

[BOOKINGS](#)