

3 Ways to Level Up Your CX Game

To provide a good customer experience (CX), an agency needs more than good intentions, especially as more of those interactions shift online. Given the wide range of services being provided through a growing number of digital platforms, agencies can struggle to deliver a consistent level of CX, whether to constituents or employees.

That was the focus of a recent GovLoop digital event, sponsored by Granicus, which brought together leaders from government and industry. During the event, panelists shared strategies and tactics for keeping pace with changing CX expectations. Here are some takeaways from their discussion.

Participants:

Kristin Eskanger

Chief of the Customer Engagement Office, Headquarters and Goddard Space Flight Center, NASA

Margeaux Akazawa

Customer Experience Lead, NASA

Nathan Sanfilippo

Executive Director, Multi-Channel Technology, Veterans Experience Office

Charlotte Lee

Strategic Lead, CX and Innovation, Granicus

1. Get to Know Your Customers Better

One of NASA's top priorities has been providing a better IT experience for its internal customers, that is, NASA staff, contractors, researchers and other groups that support its mission.

The challenge is that these customers are scattered across 10 different centers around the country, each with its own mission focus, said Margeaux Akazawa with NASA. For example, the Armstrong Flight Research Center in Edwards, California, tests supersonic aircraft, while the Johnson Space Center in Houston supports the International Space Station.

"How do you engage such a range of customers? How do you think about their needs and how to improve that experience?" Akazawa said.

NASA has taken what you might call a federated approach to CX. The agency has established business and customer relationship managers (BRMs and CRMs) at each center, said Kristin Eskanger. Their job is to stay close to their center's contractors and staff and ensure that NASA incorporates their unique requirements into its overall CX strategy.

"We know our centers, and they are so uniquely different, but we need to deliver consistent services, with consistent messages," Eskanger said. "Having this community [of BRMs and CRMs] helps ensure that consistency."

Expert Tip: Organize Listening Sessions

Regular surveys are an important part of any CX initiative. But while they are necessary, they are not necessarily sufficient. To dig deeper, NASA's BRMs and CRMs conduct regular interviews with their customers. "Those interviews help to add some nuance and color" to survey results, said Akazawa.

In particular, the sessions try to understand what motivates people: "What are the things they are proud of, what brings them to work every day," she said. "In the long run, that helps you to improve your CX, because it will help you develop a strategy that's really tailored to their goals."

2. Focus on Your Follow Through

VA also has a complex constituency, particularly in terms of age group, which the agency needs to factor into any CX strategy, said VA's Nathan Sanfilippo.

"We know older generations prefer the contact center and the telephone, and the younger generations don't," he said. "We want to do both well, provide both with what they are looking for. But do we prioritize all of that when we are dealing with limited resources?"

Of course, the first step is to get feedback, whether that's through feedback surveys, research groups or human-centered design processes (see sidebar). But it can't stop there. Once you understand what's most important, you need to commit to seeing it through, Sanfilippo said.

Think in terms of a feedback loop, he said. In some cases, you solicit feedback, incorporate the input into a service or program, and then close the loop by letting people know what you've done. In other cases, you close the loop by letting them know that something is not a high priority at this point.

Otherwise, all that data just becomes "shelfware, a binder full of great research that isn't doing any good," he said.

Expert Tip: Seize the CX Buzz

CX has become a high-profile issue across government, especially at the federal level, where the Biden administration issued an executive order on transforming CX and service delivery. Such clear mandates don't come around that often, so don't miss the moment, said Sanfilippo. "That's a lever that you can use to help advocate for change, for resources, for whatever you need at your agency," he said.

3. Break Down Your CX Silos

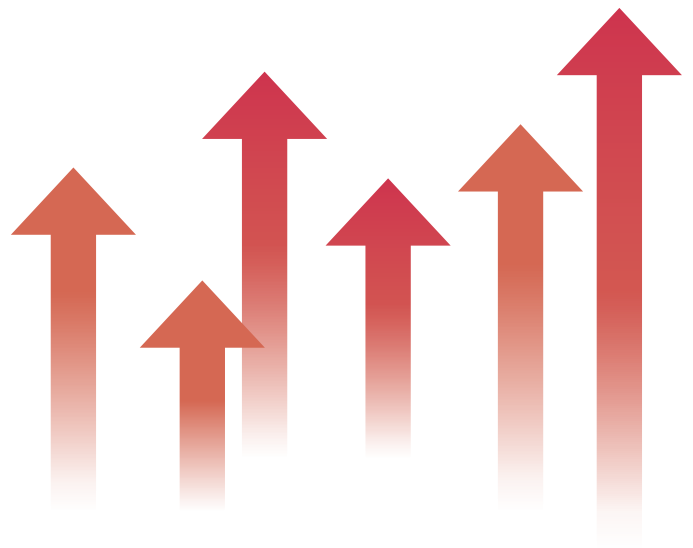
Generally speaking, said Charlotte Lee with Granicus, three main groups shape CX: a communications team, a program office and the IT department. The problem, she said, is that each player looks at CX from their own perspective and manages their own processes. But those silos are irrelevant from a customer's perspective, she said.

Lee recommends viewing customer engagement in terms of a unified funnel that begins when someone opts in to receive communications about a program, with the different players working in sync to support the customer's journey from awareness to action.

In particular, agencies need to simplify the customer experience, recognizing that "the people who are most in need [of services] are the least able to navigate complex processes," Lee said.

Personalization should be a big part of that. Instead of a blanket communications strategy, the agency should give people options for how and when they receive communications. "We know from our data that personalized communications get more engagement," she said.

That includes offering to send reminders about important deadlines. It's like how a dentist's office will send you an email when it's time to make an appointment or to remind you about an upcoming one. Such personalized touches "together make for more trustworthy government customer experiences," Lee said.



To learn more, watch the full session on-demand.