

5 Practical Steps to Enhance the Government Experience

Agencies need to provide services for both employees and constituents, but many find themselves working in the dark. They don't know how those services are resonating with the intended users, and without those insights it can be hard to move forward — to deliver the kind of digitally driven experiences people want and expect.

Agencies need a long-term strategy aimed at enhancing the government experience. To explore the topic, GovLoop recently hosted an [event](#) featuring government and industry leaders, and together they described five key strategies to improve interactions for both government workers and constituents seeking services.

Speakers:

- * **Barbara Morton**
Deputy Chief Veterans Experience Officer,
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- * **Marybeth Murphy**
Acting Director of Customer and Product
Experience, Public Experience Portfolio,
Technology Transformation Services,
General Services Administration (GSA)
- * **Nicshan (AI) Floyd**
Deputy Director, Customer Experience, DHS
- * **Michael Anderson**
Chief Strategist, Public Sector, Informatica

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**Focus on
data-driven
insights**

Agencies need data to help inform their user-experience efforts. It's crucial to identify "all the data that could impact the ability of a constituent or user to gain a service, or transact with their government agency," Anderson said.

Ideally, the information gleaned from data "across an agency, and across multiple agencies" will give insight into the quality of those interactions, he said. Agencies will have "a better understanding of the constituent and the user" in support of more effective interactions.

2

**Be both
quantitative
and qualitative**

VA leans heavily on data, for example in the form of customer experience surveys, Morton said. The department then leverages that to inform the qualitative experience, ensuring it addresses the human factor.

In addition to having "boots on the ground" available to address pain points as they arise, that qualitative approach to the user experience is informed by human-centered design, an approach to service delivery that focuses on user needs and requirements.

Human-centered design enables the agency to "shape and mold solutions, to address the moments that matter most" to the end users, she said.



3

Get rid of paper, for real

At the Department of Homeland Security, paper documents can impede the user experience, both for employees and constituents. Floyd proposes a simple fix. “Get rid of the paper form,” he said. And when you go digital, go all the way.

“People have said, ‘We’re going to go to electronic forms,’ [but] their idea of an electronic form was a PDF. A PDF form is not a smart electronic form,” he said. “Transitioning the agency to real electronic forms will allow you to only ask the necessary questions that you need to ask, gather that information, and then repurpose the information in a secure, reliable, and managed way.”



4

Leverage continuous monitoring

It’s important to get users’ feedback on their agency interactions, but that shouldn’t be a one-off effort. Needs change and systems evolve, so it’s important to check back from time to time. At GSA, “we’re continually monitoring the data to see what’s working, what’s not working,” Murphy said.

The user-experience team will send out surveys and will also monitor site activity, “what they’re querying while they’re on our site...what are they clicking on, what are they not clicking on, how much time are they spending,” she said. These efforts are ongoing, not just one-and-done.

The same goes for usability testing. Even when a service is up and running, the team will continue to test. “We want to refine it, to go to potential users and set them up with common tasks and see how they use it. Does it work well for them? Does it not work well?” she said. All this, in turn, informs efforts around continuous improvement.



5

Utilize robust data management tools

To make use of data in support of improved user experiences, an agency needs not just strong data management, but robust control over meta-data, “the data about the data,” Anderson, with Informatica, said.

With potentially trillions of datapoints and multiple datasets, success lies in “being able to understand that environment, scan it, and then catalog it,” he said. Agencies need a data catalog that is continuously updated, in real time, supported by modernized tools.

In support of that cataloging effort, it’s also important to have in place a strong data governance program. That is “foundational to any use of data for government customer experience,” he said. “You need to understand who your data owners are, who your stewards are, and you need to be able to apply automatically your policies to that data as it flows across an organization.”

With strong governance helping to ensure the quality of the data driving the customer experience, users can be assured of accurate outcomes, “and you know it’s accurate too, as you manage those social services and programs across your agency,” he said.



Watch the event [here](#).