Thoughtful Service Design

Improve Customer Experience by Prioritizing Employee Experience

Improving customer experience (CX) has become a focus for many Canadian government organizations in recent years, responding to public expectations for interactions on par with those they have come to expect from businesses. From **health** and **finance** ministries to **immigration** and **elections**, the public seeks seamless, efficient, personalized communications and access to government information, programs, and services. Government organizations will be well positioned to deliver on these expectations when they also consider the employee experience (EX) and its role in shaping positive interactions with the people they serve. By taking both EX and CX into consideration when designing government services and communication touchpoints, governments can empower employees to successfully execute the vital role they play in improving CX. In this paper we look at the link between CX and EX and how to get started with service design that considers both, along with other practical tools.

Understanding the CX-EX Link

Beginning with the pandemic-era move to remote offices, and now with protocols for hybrid work environments, employees are working differently. They have been learning new skills, adapting to new processes, evaluating their goals, and seeking a sense of professional purpose. Understandably, organizations seeking to improve EX aim to understand what workers truly value and the tools they need to perform their jobs optimally.

Employee experience extends beyond the realm of human resources; it is increasingly vital for effective and efficient service delivery. Put simply, successfully meeting customer demands and corresponding CX benchmarks requires an understanding of how to best empower and equip employees to serve the public.

Driving a successful EX has a demonstrated impact on multiple outcomes for organizations. According to a 2024 meta-analysis from Gallup, which includes data from more than 183,000 business units across 53 industries and 90 countries, a more engaged workforce is positively correlated with higher productivity, profitability and sales, and can expect a 10% increase in customer loyalty and engagements.

Canadians Flock to Digital Options

77% of Canadians have now connected with government online, 60% within the past year, and online channels continue to be the preferred method for accessing government.

Source: Institute for Citizen-Centred Service Citizens First Study – 2023/2024

Engaged employees drive CX and other organizational goals

+18%
Higher productivity

+23%
Optimized financial performance

+10%
Customer loyalty/engagement

Source: Gallup Q12® meta-analysis report, 2024

Employee experience (EX) challenges can directly affect customer experience (CX), creating opportunities to address specific areas, as illustrated in the following examples.

EX-CX Impacts and Recommendations

Pain Point
Employee experience can negatively influence customer experience when employees are not personally invested in their jobs and organization.

Opportunity
Identify factors of the employee experience that are impacting the organization and customer interactions.

Pain Point
Employees can become disengaged when organizations are unable to empathize with workers to identify the factors that impact their day-to-day and year-to-year experiences

Opportunity
Use personas and employee journey tools to better understand EX and find areas for improvement.

Pain Point
When technology is overly complicated or inadequate, employee engagement decreases.

Opportunity
Provide user friendly, powerful technologies and develop a multi-channel, multi-device, multi-modal, and multi-experience strategy.

Source: Gartner, Inc. Improve Employee Experience to Drive Improvements in Customer Experience, 26 November 2019

"Placing clients at the centre of the service design and delivery process allows government to better understand the public's needs, and tailor services accordingly. A successful digital government continually improves how it designs and delivers services to improve the lives of its citizens, while maximizing the opportunities presented by information and technology to do so."

Government of Canada
Guideline on Service and Digital | 2024-01-10

For government leaders, the following considerations can help foster a supportive and effective employee experience (EX):

EX Considerations for Government Leaders

- Do I understand the factors that make our employees feel empowered and motivated?
- Do I know what tools or resources they need to work effectively?
- Do we have a collaborative culture that considers employees' innovative ideas?
- Do they feel comfortable recommending updates or opportunities for process efficiency?
- Have we identified where we can reduce system complexity and friction points with employees or customers?
- How are we measuring the impact of EX on our interactions with the public?

"When employees are empowered with the right tools, processes, and culture, they can deliver services that truly meet the needs of citizens. A well-designed employee experience fosters innovation, efficiency, and empathy—enabling teams to create seamless, human-centered services. By investing in EX, public sector organizations build the foundation for a better CX, ensuring that every interaction is accessible, responsive, and meaningful for the people they serve."

Jim Kirk
AVP Citizen Engagement and Solution Operations

Designing Services with Humans at the Centre

Governments' approach to service design is a key opportunity for improving both CX and EX by adopting human-centred design approaches and principles, including design thinking.

Design thinking can be useful for understanding and improving customers' needs and experiences, as well as employees' needs and the factors that motivate them. Many organizations and disciplines leverage five commonly accepted stages of this valuable process:

The Five Stages of Design Thinking

1 **Empathize:**
Research your users' needs

2 **Define:**
State your users' needs and problems

3 **Ideate:**
Challenge assumptions & generate ideas

4 **Prototype:**
Begin creating solutions

5 **Test:**
Try your solutions out and modify for continuous improvement

Applying Design Thinking with Service Design

Service Design focuses on designing, aligning, and optimizing the government's operations to better support the customer experience. Tools can be deployed as well to improve EX and engage employees and stakeholders in developing new customer services.

Empathize and Define

Personas

These hypothetical "characters" represent types of employees or customers. Including factors like geography, income, skills, education, and other factors can reveal valuable insights into how likely an employee or customer is to use a new technology or tool, or how they will be most successful in accessing and using new information.

Journey Maps

These visual tools map an employee's or customer's experience with a government, from first encounter to ongoing interactions over time. By visualizing these touchpoints, organizations can identify areas for CX or EX improvement. Maps can reveal significant moments or sources of frustration, leading to ideation to reduce friction and improve outcomes. These tools provide insights into emotions, needs, and behaviours at each interaction, enabling government to re-imagine more empathetic, intuitive, and effective services.

Ideate and Prototype

Service Blueprints

These maps illustrate the steps involved in delivering a service, from initial customer interaction to backend operations. They identify key touchpoints, potential pain points, and areas for improvement, enabling governments to streamline workflows, allocate resources, and ensure that digital tools and processes will be effective for employees and customers. When used in combination with personas and journey maps, government organizations can predict how well their teams may adapt, and which teams may be resistant to changes.

Test and Refine

Evaluation Periods

Once new services or programs have been developed, a period of evaluation gauges the effectiveness of changes implemented. Have points of friction been reduced? Are customers engaging with new services? Is satisfaction high? Are employees consistently using new tools and resources? Are teams reaching performance benchmarks?

The Maximus Total Experience Management Solution

A modular, flexible, and scalable platform, designed for service excellence

From industry-leading technology solutions to forward-thinking methodologies, Maximus's Total Experience Management Solution (TXM) helps government organizations integrate traditionally siloed considerations for EX and CX with tools that deliver exceptional experiences to address today's challenges – and tomorrow's opportunities.

TXM integrates modern and emerging technologies, tools, and approaches to provide:

- Superior **CX** based on deep insights by applying best practices in design thinking, customer and employee feedback tools, and automation for continuous monitoring and improvement

- Rewarding and engaging **EX** that empowers workers to identify improvements and gives them the tools and resources needed to succeed

- Optimized **UX** (user experience) that delivers seamless, frictionless service to end users

- **Multi-experience** approaches based on customer preferences across various devices and communication channels (chat, voice, e-mail, etc.), integrating AI-driven automation, cloud-native modular services, and seamless interoperability to deliver personalized, scalable, and secure interactions across digital platforms

Service Design Check List for Governments

1. Understand employees' needs
Conduct research using focus groups, individual interviews, and employee feedback mechanisms to understand needs, pain points, and opportunities within their experience and how these might impact CX. Use this information to build out personas for employees.

2. Map the employee journey
Map their touchpoints within the government program and with the people the organization serves. Then identify moments that matter or points of friction within their processes.

3. Collaborate with employees
Co-create new processes that can improve their experience. These conversations can take place in the form of workshops, focus groups, or individual interviews.

4. Create a culture of design thinking and innovation
Use service design tools as a blueprint to create continued opportunities for teams to spark creativity and innovation as they tackle challenges.

5. Solicit and listen to feedback
Create a pathway for feedback among leadership and service teams to ensure that everyone's voice is heard within the ideation process.

6. Prioritize friction reduction
Employees may struggle with complex processes that are built for customer efficiency, but do not allow for employee efficiency. Document and address these points.

7. Define and measure success and impact
Design success metrics to increase employee satisfaction and effectiveness, efficiency, and innovation.

Conclusion

Government organizations that place an equal emphasis on customer and employee experiences will be positioned to improve customer interactions, thereby boosting public engagement and trust. Both employees and the people they serve want to feel valued and appreciated, and research shows that focusing on the empowerment of both CX and EX pays off.

Investing in EX through thoughtful service design can help governments agencies consider the total user experience holistically with considerations for how employee training and development, feedback, and engagement all influence organizational performance and ultimately impact CX. This approach also empowers governments to make technology investment or innovation decisions based on insights about which digital capabilities are likely to be useful for both employees and customers. Further, working with a trusted systems integrator can help leaders navigate these processes and implement solutions to maximize success.

By unlocking a Total Experience strategy, government can take a holistic approach to modernizing services and programs in a way that is most impactful for their employees and other key stakeholders.

Getting citizen services right, the first time.

Across all industries, consumers are **least likely** to trust and recommend a government service after a poor experience.

Global Study: ROI of Customer Experience
Qualtrics XM Institute | April 2022