

Oulu10

City of Oulu's centralised customer service

Published On: 10 June 2014

Organisation: City of Oulu, Finland

Country: Finland

Level of government: Local government

Sector: General public services

Type: Digital, Public Service

Launched in: 2008

Overall development time: 40 months

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

With Oulu10, we have now developed a centralised, multi-channel municipal customer service system, in which services and customer events are arranged in terms of processes rather than organisational structure. Customers do not need to know the local authority's organisational structure in order to find a service, a location or a contact.

The services are presented in terms of customer groups on the basis of needs, circumstances or age. By dealing with the local authority in a centralised way, customers save both time and money. Customers can select the best way of using the system according to what suits their needs: visiting a service point, using the phone service or using the online service portal. A new online chat service channel has been implemented. There are a number of service points around Oulu. Some of these also function as joint service centres.

The selection of services in joint service centres has widened and will be even wider from 2014 when Oulu will start piloting Customerservice2014 – a concept introduced by the Ministry of Finance. The objective is to gather all public sector services into one service centre (one-stop-shop). Oulu10 has become a real concept, and the customer service provided at the service points and channels is of a constant quality, with largely the same content in terms of service selection.

Why the innovation was developed

Previously, the City of Oulu's services were arranged on the basis of organisational structure and customers had to be familiar with this structure in order to contact the right person. There were also different service points for different services. The service quality also varied, as each organisation was responsible for developing its own service standards.

Objectives

Improve access, Improve effectiveness, Improve service quality, Improve user satisfaction

- Meet customer service needs by using a high-quality, multi-channel approach and thus improve customer satisfaction:
 - Services should be easier to find, as a customer's service event is treated as an entity with a beginning and an end, and the system automatically passes cases onto another processing party if no answer or solution is found straight away.
 - Improve service quality through better access to services and better trained staff.
 - Improve the impact, productivity and cost-effectiveness of the City's services, for instance via reallocation of resources, making services available online, removal of duplicated functions and discontinuation of other service points.
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Main beneficiaries

General population, Government bodies, Government staff

The 200 000 residents of Oulu.

Results

Efficiency

- The cumulative cost savings measured in service delivery are EUR 291 200.
 - Savings in customer service structure EUR 6 670 million.
 - The calculation period is 8 years (2008-2015).
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Service quality

Accessibility:

Service-level assessments showed the following:

- 69% of respondents felt that the service was quick.
- 60% of respondents felt that the service channel was easy to use.

Responsiveness:

- 73% of respondents felt that their service needs had been taken care of.
- 81% of respondents reported that they had been dealt with appropriately in the service.

Reliability:

73% of respondents felt that the service was based on good information.

Other:

68% of respondents felt they had been well served by the channel they were using.

User satisfaction

91% of customers would recommend the service to others.

Other improvements

Employee satisfaction:

- Assessments show that job satisfaction is good.
 - In addition, the following emerged as strengths: the system was felt to be customer-oriented; the personnel felt they were succeeding in their work, and the ability to prioritise was strong; the personnel were aware of the unit's main task and the aims of their work; and cooperation with their supervisor was working well.
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Evaluation

In 2011, the Ministry of Finance, which funded the project, undertook a quality evaluation of the customer service centre's services using an evaluation method created for the project. The second evaluation was in 2012. The result of this evaluation was that the development is continuing towards the same target.

Development

Design

The assessment began with the idea of wanting to make things easier for customers by bringing services together at one service point. The aim was also to reduce the City's network of service points. A further aim was to bring together in one place the coordination of online service use, to allow it to be developed systematically.

Design time: 9 months

Testing

The development process made use of the development model and documentation of the Ministry of Finance's Municipal IT Unit.

The development model outlines best practices and methodology for managing development projects.

A common joint customer service model was piloted in Oulu as part of the ASPA project coordinated by Ministry of Finance. The concept has been adapted in other municipalities.

Testing time: 2 months

Implementation

Tools used:

- The service was introduced in stages: the face-to-face service point was opened and the concept introduced in December 2008. The phone service began a year later (2009) and the online service a year after that (2010). Development was based on the implementation plan, which steered the launch of services. The services of different departments were transferred to the central service in stages. Currently there are approximately 50 different services at the centralised interface.
- The customer service operation is supported by a dedicated computer system acquired for this purpose (CRM system).

Resources used:

Direct costs:

- Office and supplies: EUR 37 000.
- Personnel: EUR 706 000.
- Services purchased: EUR 459 000.
- Services purchased (computer systems): EUR 811 000.
- Rents and premises: EUR 22 000.
- Costs of travel and meetings: EUR 30 000.
- Other costs (e.g. communications): EUR 137 000.
- Total: EUR 2 202 million.

Indirect Costs:

- Five employees transferred from service points that were being discontinued.
- The management of the municipal-owned company (above project manager level) provided input to the project without charging for this. Estimate of about 0.5 person-years of work.

Implementation time: 12 months

Diffusion

- Change management in all fields of operation.
 - Solution was to get the management groups act as change managers.
 - Skills development.
 - A plan to develop the skills of personnel was drafted and implemented.
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Challenges and solutions

- No scaling or diffusion within the organisation; instead, this is a case of centralisation within the city. However, the concept has been introduced in many other Finnish local authorities and these have made use of the experience from the Oulu project.
 - Network of customer service project in towns and cities:
 - It was established in 2011 for exchanging information on managing and maintaining this customer service concept and on the projects introduced in these local authorities. The meetings arranged by this network have included participants from several local authorities. Individual workshops have been arranged for these local authorities, in which good customer service practices and experiences have been shared and the drafting of customer relationship plans and cost/benefit calculations launched.
 - E. g.: Lappeenranta has launched its Winkki customer service centre based on the customer service concept.
 - Porvoo and Kajaani have also launched customer service operations based on the customer service concept.
 - In Jyväskylä, Turku, Mikkeli and Lieksa the project process is under way and proceeding in line with the concept.
 - In the other local authorities, the project is at the preparatory stage or the subject of a preliminary investigation.
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Partnerships

Local authorities of Kuusamo and Rovaniemi

Other Public Sector

The local authorities of Kuusamo and Rovaniemi have been involved. They started similar joint service centers in their own municipalities.

Ministry of Finance's Municipal IT Unit

Other Public Sector

The development process made use of the development model and documentation of the Ministry of Finance's Municipal IT Unit.

Service users

Other

For development purposes a customer panel has also been set up to aid in service concept development and to provide an assessment from the customer's viewpoint.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

The commitment of management was initially a problem, as was determination of the party responsible for customer service at the strategic level.

The matter was not determined at the outset, which was a mistake that affected general commitment and guidelines.

Conditions for success

- Motivated personnel.
 - Interactive leadership.
 - Co-operation with government service providers.
 - ICT-skills.
 - Cooperation with different service areas.
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