

Tax Administration in Social Media

(SOME discussion forum)

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Organisation: Finnish Tax Administration

Country: Finland

Level of government: Central government

Sector: General public services

Type: Digital, Public Service

Launched in: 2010

Overall development time: 2 weeks

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Description

Targeted to private customers, this service gives tax guidance by helping customers to check the pre-filled tax return form and final tax return. The service is delivered on the largest commercial open Finnish online discussion forum www.suomi24.fi, which has 3.2 million visitors a day. Customers can ask questions 24/7 anonymously. Questions are answered from Monday to Friday, from 9 am-3 pm. Civil servants introduce themselves by "tax teams" and their first name. The service is open twice a year: in spring when the prefilled tax form is checked and in autumn when the final tax calculation goes out, each time for 2 months.

Why the innovation was developed

The innovation was developed (1) to enhance productivity, (2) to develop customer services and (3) to meet customers where they are.

Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Improve access, Improve effectiveness, Improve efficiency, Improve service quality, Improve user satisfaction

- To support our strategy to provide proactive guidance in places where our customers are: we go to the customers and make it easy for them by guiding them to more efficient channels.
 - To support traditional channels (phone and desk).
 - To ensure that right/correct information is available as customers discuss and search for information anyway.
 - To establish an economically sensible channel for customers and civil servants.
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Main beneficiaries

Businesses, General population, Government bodies, Government staff

- Private customers (potential of 3.2 million).
- Tax administration.

Results

Efficiency

- 30 000 customer visits, 150 000 customers reading the answers.
 - 800 questions, all were answered.
 - Channel efficiency comparison:
 - SOME: 250 customers per person a day, 1 000 people read the answer.
 - Phone: 50 customers per person a day.
 - Face to face: 30 customers per person a day.
 - Channel strategy support:
 - 84% had visited tax.fi pages first.
 - 87% felt that due to Suomi24.fi service they did not call the tax services.
 - 65% felt that due to Suomi24.fi service they did not visit the tax office
 - Savings: Estimate of EUR 148 500, which means 65% cost reduction if 75% of our customers using the Suomi24 service do not call the tax administration. This is based on the following calculation:
 - EUR 225 000 costs when 22 500 customers call the tax administration (22 500 X EUR 10).
 - EUR 76 500 costs when they use suomi24.fi instead (22 500 X EUR 3.4).
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Service quality

Accessibility:

87% of the users found the service easy to approach.

Responsiveness:

97% of the questions were answered within the next working day. The vast majority of customers found this sufficient.

Reliability:

Customers found no mistakes in answers.

User satisfaction

87% of users got the service/answer they needed/wanted and felt that the service was understandable and user friendly.

Development

Design

Our service developers and marketing specialists designed the innovation.

Design time: 1 week

Testing

The first year was a testing (piloting) period.

Implementation

Tools used:

- Existing commercial public discussion forum.
- Microsoft group calendar (for scheduling the answering by the team members).

Resources used:

- Team of 5 - 6 experienced customer service personnel.
- 6 taxation substance specialists to support the customer service.
- Communications unit at service if needed.

Implementation time: 1 week

Partnerships

suomi24.fi discussion forum

Private sector

We used an already existing popular commercial discussion forum with 3.2 million users. We did not have to promote the service so much as the customers were already using the discussion forum. The customers were already familiar with the user interface as well.

Lessons Learned

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- Service personnel must have good writing skills. This is not the case for face-to-face or phone services.
 - Unofficial, modern way of working is motivating for personnel.
 - It takes resources from other channels.
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Conditions for success

- Have to find the right people for the service delivery.
 - Have to find a partner who already has a lot of users.
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Other information

SOME channels are good:

- If the customer base is heterogeneous: great masses of customers or special, smaller customer groups.
 - If the service is well defined and limited.
 - If you have a good understanding of how the particular social media forum is used (by whom, for what, how much).
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