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3 Steps
to Instill a CX Culture
in Your Agency

During the pandemic, digital services became a vital asset to governmental agencies and citizens alike. Here's how the public sector can continue to build exceptional digital experiences.
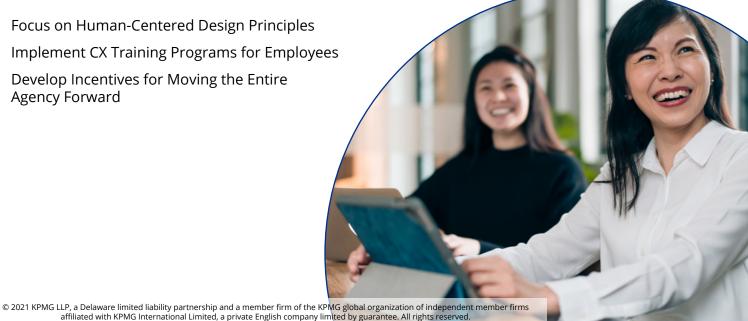
Overview

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Government institutions in the United States provide a myriad of services to over 331 million people. While Americans' needs for these services remain as important as ever, particularly as we continue to maneuver through the COVID-19 pandemic, the way agencies provide them is shifting, as are constituent expectations. With this in mind, how can agencies build optimal digital experiences, why does it matter, and what steps should they follow to ensure better digital experiences for their constituents?

That was the topic of discussion during the third installment of the "**Blueprints for a Modern Government**" series, presented by KPMG and hosted by George Jackson, director of events at GovExec. Throughout the discussion, federal leaders from across government spoke about how they're approaching CX and working to revolutionize the constituent experience.

Here are three takeaways from the discussion.

1. Focus on Human-Centered Design Principles
2. Implement CX Training Programs for Employees
3. Develop Incentives for Moving the Entire Agency Forward

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1 Focus on Human-Centered Design Principles

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, agencies across the country were suddenly tasked with shifting or speeding operations in order to serve a population in crisis. The Health Resources & Services Administration, for example, was tasked with shortening its grant-provisioning process from its typical 90-120 days to less than a week with the aim to more quickly meet the needs of the hospitals and health care providers it serves. They managed to do so by embracing human-centered design principles.

Be it employees or constituents, HCD looks to ensure that people are kept central to any innovation. To this point, HRSA's Chief Information Officer Adriane Burton kept user experience at the forefront as she sought to tap artificial intelligence and machine learning to automate the application process for grantees. The result: Her organization was able to reduce the time necessary to process grants to just 5 days, ensuring funds could be allocated quickly to support healthcare providers during the worst of the pandemic.

Like the HRSA, public sector organizations can begin the shift from lengthy, bureaucratic methods toward human-centric design by understanding their audience. This is exactly what the VA did in its quest to better serve veterans, according to Barbara Morton, deputy chief veterans experience officer for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"[At the Department of Veterans Affairs] we began with a macro-journey map for veterans," said Morton. "We wanted to understand at the macro level, what were the moments that matter most to veterans in their journey, and how might VA best fit into those moments to support them."

But improving CX doesn't simply impact the constituent experience, it can also help agencies establish and pursue long-term technological change, says Christina Melton, advisory experience design director and transformation delivery lead for KPMG.

"People are at the heart of any sort of transformation [or] technology implementation," said Melton. "Once you start to understand that, you see the trends within your population. Whether it's customers, end-users, or employees, you can really start to think [about] developing tools or acquiring different technologies that really serve the true needs of those people."

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2 Implement CX Training Programs for Employees

Improving and maintaining user-centric CX isn't just dependent on knowing what to do, it's also having the right talent in house to develop and effect change.

"You've got to have the right talent in the organization, [otherwise] you're just not going to get the results you want," said Colt Whittall, chief experience officer for the United States Air Force. "The big thing that I focus on is we need to get CX and UX experience or user-centered design, we need to get that experience, and we need to get those skills in the Air Force."

This is easier said than done, however, as **agencies have struggled in recent years to hire and retain CX/UX talent**.

How can agencies boost the talent pipeline to ensure they can keep improvements and CX projects moving? The most important thing is to be proactive, not simply waiting for the right applicant to find the position but, build **CX programs** for employees. This way, agencies can ensure that staff understand CX and have the power and know-how to assess and improve it internally.

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3 Develop Incentives for Moving the Entire Agency Forward

Indeed, training federal employees to be CX warriors is a vital step in solving customer service issues, and part of that training should be to ensure staff understand the importance of CX.

"There's a tendency to think of focusing on customer experiences as a nice to have, as window dressing for the transformation they're going through," said Arthur Higbee, advisory managing director & transformation delivery lead at KPMG.

To truly cement CX transformation and prevent it from becoming a window dressing, agencies should incentivize training and learning opportunities. Incentivization programs can take a medley of forms, including CX bonuses, favorable budget determinations and employee recognition highlighted, according to the VA's "**Customer Experience Cookbook.**"

"You need to develop incentives for every part of the agency to move forward," said Andrei Dumitrescu, chief data officer for the State of Tennessee's TennCare Program. "Essentially [you need to] develop those cost-benefit analyses and move everybody forward."

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