

How federal agencies can pivot to experience-driven government



James Hanson
Head of Industry
Strategy for the
Public Sector,
Adobe

The pandemic drove home to many federal agencies one central truth that can sometimes be overlooked in building trust through digital experiences: People are at the center of everything the government does.

People who rely on government services are usually accessing them at critical junctures in their lives, often moments of profound need. They're looking for

relief in the aftermath of a natural disaster, for public health data during an epidemic, for financial stability in retirement, and for ways to prepare for growth or cope with losses affecting their families and businesses.

That's why agencies need to pivot to experience-driven government, meeting citizens where they're at in their journeys and connecting them with the right services at the right time.

"Our research has found that four out of five Americans rely on digital methods to get information about public services. Yet at the same time, our research also shows that 74% of the average public is frustrated with accessing information online," said James Hanson, head of industry strategy for the public sector at [Adobe](#).

"Experience-driven government is a purpose-built strategy that helps government extend its digital capabilities to be better equipped to engage customers, streamline government services, reduce the administrative burden on the public as well as the workforce, and create connected and personalized experiences."

Adjusting the focus to manage against customer journey

Hanson identified four lenses through which to view experience-driven government:

- Data and insights
- Customer journey
- Content velocity
- Digitized processes

First, to bridge the customer experience gap and improve customer satisfaction, agencies need better tools with which to capitalize on their data. Data is the one resource the federal government has in abundance: Transactional data, behavioral data and operational data are all collected by agencies.

Using analytics, agencies can derive a single source of truth and gain insights from that data to understand the behavior of customers — as well as employees — across all digital channels. They can create unified profiles of all users and map both customer and employee journeys to better understand pain points and bottlenecks.

That will let agencies customize and optimize those journeys, including outreach, based on testing.

"For example, a person who abandons a web-based form may be targeted with an email or text to remind them to complete the form," Hanson said. "And then, based on a person's unified profile or segment and their browsing behavior, that person may be advised to access information through another channel or seek a recommended service in another department."

To further flesh out that example, he pointed to a citizen who has just completed an application for support from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

If applying an experience-driven approach, the Agriculture Department might then encourage that person to apply for Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (SNAP) as well — based on eligibility data.

“Our research says 80% of the public wants an experience that’s on par with the private sector — like on Amazon. Or if you’re streaming a video on Netflix, you watch one show and then Netflix gives you a recommendation for another show or a recommendation for another product or service that you need,” Hanson said. “The technology is available today for government to be able to deliver that same type of experience.”

Reaching people everywhere consistently

What’s more, that experience needs to be accessible across a variety of digital channels, otherwise known as an omnichannel experience. Hanson said 30% of the public only has access to digital services on smartphones. That means government needs to take a mobile-first approach and enable the customer to switch seamlessly from a web-enabled site and form to a chatbot or provide the ability to contact the call center.



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The government also needs to take advantage of these interactions to achieve content velocity. Agencies must be able to deliver content at the speed of the mission across all those channels too. The content could be policy or regulation changes, public updates on programs, training materials or other documents. The content might be static, dynamic on a website, social media, rich media, even digital signboards in brick-and-mortar locations.

Managing that amount of content takes a lot of work to coordinate, create, refine, approve and publish. It’s got to be engaging, current, accurate and inclusive too, Hanson noted. Government workflows typically aren’t optimized for content velocity; they’re still operating in a model designed with legacy technology, he said.

For example, enterprise digital asset management can help organizations digitize processes by creating a centralized repository for all content. From there, a project management tool can provide transparency and apply automation to those processes and the content. There are other benefits too, Hanson said: Agencies can track the status and approval of workflows; measure and optimize content outreach, engagement and enrollment; and simultaneously reduce waste and their reliance on paper-based manual processes.

“A lot of the challenges agencies have in terms of trust with the public is that the public doesn’t know what they’re going to get because it’s difficult to get real-time status on government service requests, program or benefit fulfillment, hiring or even the same information from one department or bureau to another. It’s inconsistent,” Hanson said. “A big part of trust is having faith that what you need is what you’re going to get — or that you’re going to at least get some sort of resolution. And that is hard to do in government right now because many of the tools, systems and services to deliver an experience-driven government are built on legacy technology and processes.”

Making progress one agency at a time

But the Biden administration and Congress are prioritizing an experience-driven approach to building trust and modernizing service delivery

through the President's Management Agenda, the customer experience executive order, the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act and the Technology Modernization Fund.

Agencies continue to make significant progress. The [Census Bureau](#), for instance, began using analytics to monitor web use, outbound communications and audience behavior during the 2020 Decennial Census. It let the agency identify when content wasn't working and also when, during the customer journey, individuals left the decennial census data-gathering website. The result? Census achieved a nearly 100% completion rate for all U.S. households for the 2020 census, Hanson pointed out.

Next, consider the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). CDC saw its website traffic increase from 3.2 million views per day prior to COVID-19 to more than 1 billion visits by March 2020, he said. The demand for up-to date information generated a substantial increase in

email subscriptions. The agency had to rethink and modernize how it could achieve content velocity at the speed of the mission. Ultimately, CDC streamlined workflows so that it could deliver a consistent message and customer journey across all channels: website, email, text message, social media, direct mail and call centers.

Change is possible and happening — and it's exciting, Hanson said. 🔄

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