

carahsoft.

GOVERNMENT
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
& ENGAGEMENT SUMMIT



How Agencies Can Improve Employee Experiences

Delivering on the mission requires federal agencies to invest in people, processes and technology. Here's how leaders can invest in their people to enhance outcomes and improve service delivery.

SPONSORED BY:

okta servicenow.

At Carahsoft's [Customer Experience \(CX\) Summit](#), public and private sector leaders discussed how the government can move the mission forward by improving employee experience (EX) in a panel titled "[Culture Track: Employees as Customers](#)."

Empowering employees is foundational to delivering a better experience. When employees are frustrated or upset, this can impact outcomes and perceptions of an agency. As a [recent research report](#) from the Harvard Business Review stated, "employee satisfaction can drive improvements in customer satisfaction." But more often than not, citizens are viewed as the primary customer while employees take a back seat.

Federal leaders cannot and should not forget employees. As the old adage goes, happy employees equal happy customers.

"We know at a very deep level that if that customer experience is poor, it's going to impact the business in negative ways," said Pam Van Meter, Principal CIAM Specialist, Okta.

To understand the confluence between happy customers and happy employees, let's take a look at the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

Empowering the Frontlines: How the TSA Is Improving EX

The TSA's [primary goal](#) is to "protect the nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce." Balancing

security with creating positive customer experiences is no easy task.

Frontline officers must enforce the rules, but they are also human. After 12+ hours of telling travelers what they can and cannot bring through checkpoints, it's understandable that an officer may feel exhausted or overwhelmed.



Nicole "Niki" French, a TSA Customer Service Branch Manager, explained how her team addresses this situation by training employees and shifting the culture toward seeing security and customer experience as two sides of the same coin.

"If you provide a better service, then security compliance should go up," French said.

Building positive customer experiences goes beyond meeting the needs of travelers. French emphasized that employees should also see themselves as TSA customers, explaining that "everything we're doing is to make sure that their job is easier."

Van Meter and Ron Vickery, Area Vice President of Customer & Industry Workflows, Government, Healthcare & Higher Education at ServiceNow, agreed with this statement, adding that empowering employees to deliver on the mission is a crucial factor in improving employee experiences.

"One of the things that we forget about is if we make our employees frustrated, meaning they can't deliver that service, not only are they not going to be able to deliver that outcome, but retention drops,"

Vickery said. “You’ve got people that turn over because they’re frustrated they don’t have the tools or resources to deliver a service.”

Government leaders should work to address this disconnection between people, processes and technology. Failure to address this issue creates what business leaders call “friction.” Friction, as defined by the [Sacramento Business Journal](#), is “anything that prevents or dissuades customers from buying your products or services.” For Van Meter, removing these obstacles is vital to retaining and attracting top talent within the federal government.

“We want to make it nice for them to work,” Van Meter said. “So they actually feel invested in [the] agency mission.”

Another crucial component of attracting and retaining top talent comes down to pay. Even if agencies successfully remove barriers to service delivery, employees will leave if they don’t feel valued and reasonably compensated.

In 2019, the [House Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security](#) discussed the TSA’s challenges in retaining employees. The intense hearing made one thing clear:

“TSA’s morale is low and its attrition is high. Last year, out of 410 Federal agency subcomponents surveyed, TSA came in 410th, or last, when it came to employee pay satisfaction,” said J. Luis Correa, a Representative from the State of California.

In the years after this hearing, TSA Administrator David Pekoske and his team worked to rectify this issue. In December of 2022, [Congress approved the TSA’s pay equity plan](#), and now many frontline officers can expect to be paid commensurate with their counterparts in other agencies.

“Across the board, frontline officers are going to be getting about a 30% raise,” French said.

“We’re hoping that this raise, and getting paid what they should have been getting paid for the last 20 years will help with morale and retention.”

While the data from the pay equity adjustment and its impact on citizen experiences are not yet available to the public, the connection between the two will be interesting to observe as feedback rolls in, and teams begin modifying procedures.

“One of the things that we forget about is [that] if we make our employees frustrated, meaning they can’t deliver that service, not only are they not going to be able to deliver that outcome, but retention drops.”

Ron Vickery, Area VP, Customer & Industry Workflows, Government, Healthcare & Higher Education, ServiceNow

How Federal Agencies Can Move the Needle on EX

Feedback often doesn’t get the credit it deserves. If government leaders can effectively leverage feedback via frameworks and iterative processes, agencies can significantly improve outcomes for citizens and customers alike. Fortunately, thanks to the [President’s Management Agenda](#), feedback is now top of mind for many agency leaders.

For example, the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) Memorandum 23-15, released April 13, 2023, recommends “seeking and considering data and

information regarding the impact of personnel policies and procedures on employee engagement, mission delivery, and outcomes” as well as “establishing frequent feedback mechanisms, such as pulse surveys.”

Existing methods of tracking morale and employee feedback rely on fragmented, passive protocols, leading to a “black box” effect where employees feel their feedback does not impact or move the needle in any consequential way. As government leaders review and establish routines, the panel described how transparent, iterative feedback processes make employees feel seen.

“If I know that I’m moving the needle, and I’m making a difference, and I’m enabled to do that in a way that moves this agency mission forward, that’s a lot of value,” Van Meter said. “We’re being heard, we’re adding value [and] all of that is going to increase external-facing [services].”

Vickery agreed, emphasizing the importance of a framework that doesn’t just ask for feedback, but also demonstrates follow-through by asking employees about subsequent changes.

“The way we run those surveys is, ‘What’s your input? Do you believe we’re going to make change

as a result of your input? Did we make changes as a result of your input?’ Following all the way through to, ‘Did this take effect?’ and continuing to iterate around that,” explained Vickery. “That’s the way we believe [a] survey should be run.”

If employees don’t see those follow-up questions, they may feel their voices don’t have weight — that their feedback simply disappears into a void and they won’t experience improvements. M-23-15 lists employee engagement and employee satisfaction as key indicators of overall organizational health. Improving these metrics depends on creating frequent forums for feedback where employees feel heard, and helping them see how their voice is having an impact on the community. As this process makes the employee feel valued, it also helps improve EX.

“Tracking those surveys and actually helping/ giving them feedback that you’re actually paying attention to what they’re telling you . . . is even more impactful,” Van Meter said.

Learn more about how [ServiceNow](#) and [Okta](#) can help you gather feedback and improve the employee experience.



Culture Track: Employees as Customers