

Effective public sector citizen communications

Supporting citizen-service transformation for the 21st century digital government

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The UK public sector is in the midst of a period of transformation and improving citizen engagement will be key to the success of this change. The effectiveness of public services relies on reliable, accurate and clear citizen communication. The public sector produces millions of personalised citizen communications each year in the form of, for example, benefits statements, council tax bills and vehicle tax reminders as well as ad-hoc correspondence. Use of legacy outdated and disparate systems makes it almost impossible for central and local government to deliver consistent and accurate communication across printed and electronic channels and to cost-effectively deliver accessible or multilingual communications to meet the diversity of today's UK citizens.

A single platform for CCM can mitigate these challenges by enabling a single communication document to be written once and published to any channel, format or language. This report examines how CCM can drive operational efficiencies, reduce IT expenses, lower call-centre costs and shift printed communication to cheaper online channels—leading to lower paper, stationery and postage costs along with reducing environmental impact.

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Supporting citizen-centric service transformation for the 21st century digital government

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today, the UK public sector faces the challenge of driving efficiency and effectiveness whilst satisfying rising citizen expectations in an increasingly diverse society. Effective citizen communication is key to the delivery of citizen-centric services and promises to extend citizen choice, empower citizens to shape the services they require and enable government to engage with socially excluded audiences. Some areas of local and central government are responding by adopting customer communications management (CCM) tools to create and distribute interactive multichannel communications using a single template design. This has led to reduced IT and office staff costs associated with creating and maintaining multiple templates, improved front-office productivity and reduced customer service calls generated as a result of unclear or confusing communication.

- **Major social, economic and technological factors have transformed the world in which public services operate.** The public sector must offer a broad palette of services to a diverse population across channels with universal reach and affordability. Communications must take account of accessibility needs, language requirements and the growing use of digital channels such as the web, email and mobile SMS.
- **The use of online communications such as self-service applications is increasing in popularity.** Transformational government strategy and the Varney review have seen many public sector organisations move to less costly online channels to reduce "avoidable contact" and lower call volumes to contact centres. The move to online applications, such as the DVLA's electronic vehicle licensing or HMRC's online self-assessment, can further lower the costs associated with the printing, storage and postage of paper forms.
- **Clear and accurate communication is crucial to improving public service delivery.** Departments such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Department of Health (DH) and the Department for Transport (DfT) produce millions of citizen communication documents on an annual basis. Whilst communications volumes in local authorities may be lower, they face the common challenge of design complexity and multichannel distribution as their central government counterparts.
- **Most public sector agencies are faced with reduced budgets, ageing legacy systems and higher costs in maintaining traditional multiple and disparate back-office and front-office systems.** Citizen communications are often based on a multitude of different templates, stored in different environments, making them very difficult to update, track and maintain. The result is a costly, time-consuming and often frustrating process for both citizens and public sector employees.
- **The impact of inaccurate or unclear information can be far-reaching.** Failure to provide accurate and complete information can have a serious impact on both the efficiency of local and central government departments and on the citizen's choice and use of public services. For instance, inaccurate information may lead to citizens making inappropriate decisions about their financial plans or citizens not claiming something to which they are legitimately entitled. Lack of awareness of services and poor availability of information in different languages has also been shown to contribute to low take-up of benefits.
- **Central and local government departments should consider a unified approach to the creation and distribution of multichannel communications.** A customer communications management (CCM) platform can connect to disparate data sources, eliminating the need for point solutions and legacy systems. CCM ensures document compliance through automated workflow approval and puts approved templates into the hands of front-office employees, reducing the demand on IT resources. Multilingual, accessible and multichannel delivery can all be accommodated through the design of a single template, reducing IT expenses, reducing the time to provision and improving the consistency of communications across print and electronic formats.

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1 Introduction

Local and central government today are caught in a painful squeeze of internal and external pressures as they tackle issues such as climate change, ageing population, social care and public health. They must deliver citizen-centric services against a backdrop of rising citizen expectations across multiple channels such as email, web, letter, phone, self-service and face-to-face while meeting demands for cost efficiency and tougher compliance challenges highlighted by the number of high profile data losses in the past year. Meanwhile, budget constraints are compelling central and local government to consider shared services as a way to reduce both front-office and back-office costs while maintaining service quality. Consequently, leading public sector organisations are recognising that improving service delivery requires new ways of communicating, and are rethinking the way they create, manage and deliver citizen communications.

Communication is the foundation of citizen engagement

The UK public sector produces millions of communications on a daily basis for a diverse population, with varying service needs and wants. A document supports every citizen communication, whether this is in writing, by telephone, face-to-face or online. Think housing benefits, disability allowances, council tax statements, vehicle tax reminders and other personal correspondence—all are critical documents that represent a citizen's interaction with a public service. While online services are becoming more popular, the speed to adopt cheaper online channels has often resulted in a "bolt-on" approach with business and technical architectures separate from traditional face-to-face or paper-based channels, leading to poor and fragmented communications. This occurs not only across media channels but also across public sector agencies—the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) for instance, estimates that 40% of contact with its services comes from people who are customers of more than one of its agencies.

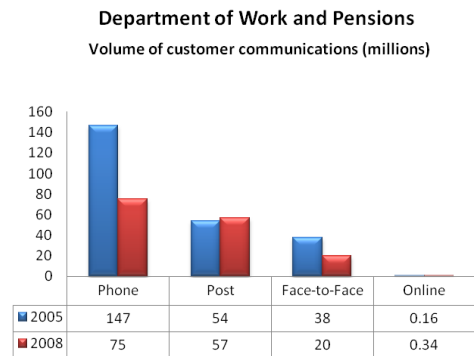
Despite the rapid growth of the internet, telephone and paper communication remain the most popular communication for many public services. For instance, in 2008–09 HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) answered around 62 million calls through its 31 contact centres, while the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) estimated that in 2008 it received 75 million phone calls. While strategies to reduce "avoidable contact" led to telephone calls falling to almost half, postal communications actually rose by 3 million to 57 million in 2008. Despite the fact that by mid-2008, 51% of DWP customers were online, online contacts represented less than 1% of DWP's total citizen contacts.

Local authorities face the same communication challenges as central government. Although produced in lower volumes, communication such as personalised correspondence, benefit entitlement letters and council tax statements are often complex and manually intensive to create and distribute, placing a huge administrative burden on local authority resources. In March 2010, for example, Canterbury Council sent nearly 100,000 letters generated by its benefits, council tax and housing services. According to research undertaken by Objective Corporation¹, on average a tier 1 local authority will have 2,466 live and current documents in the public domain, which includes advice and guidance, newsletter and policy communication. Such high volumes of printed communication translate into significant costs in staff time, printing, stationery and postage and, of course, in environmental impact. On top of this, it is estimated that local councils spend nearly £20m in a year translating documents into more than 75 languages, many of which are never read².

Silo-based approaches to citizen communication creates cost, complexity and risk

Many public sector organisations struggle to deliver consistent, accurate and relevant multichannel citizen communications due to a legacy of disconnected and outdated bespoke systems. Citizen correspondence is typically managed with cumbersome tools, using very basic decentralised systems for document creation and distribution. The result is a costly, time-consuming, error-prone and often frustrating process for both citizens and government employees, which can mean delays and errors in citizens receiving payments along with confusing letters that create unwanted calls and complaints into call centres. Meanwhile, in today's age of compliance, public sector departments must also manage citizen communications within the context of privacy, data protection, freedom of information and security. Data privacy breaches such as the despatch of up to 1,215 DVLA letters (containing name, address and driving entitlements) to incorrect recipients in 2007 due to address matching errors highlights the constant need to ensure the reliable and secure delivery of citizen communications.

These dynamics are compelling innovative public sector agencies to implement a customer communications management (CCM) platform to offer integrated communication across channels and drive the delivery of accessible, reliable and joined-up public services. This paper examines some of the key communications challenges facing local and central government, the impact of poor communication and how CCM can help public sector organisations control back office costs and enable more joined-up, efficient and effective front-office citizen interaction.



Source: National Audit Office analysis of Department for Work and Pensions data

2 Diverse citizens with diverse needs

The Smarter Government and Digital Britain white papers set out ambitions to create digitally-enabled public services used by a digitally-enabled population. Alongside the recommendations by the Department of Communities and Local Government to bring more aspects of citizen engagement online, there is a clear policy imperative for a connected government working alongside a connected population.

UK citizen diversity

The public sector faces unique challenges in delivering citizen service transformation. It must offer a broad palette of services with universal reach, addressing a very large and diverse constituent base where citizens have the right to equal access to information and services. For instance, there are currently 1.3 million disabled people in the UK who are available for and want to work, almost 2 million adults are either blind or visually impaired and, with current trends in population ageing set to continue, it is projected that, by 2041, one in four people will be aged 65 or over. Meanwhile the need for multilingual communication continues to grow for many constituencies where English is not the first language. The London Borough of Haringey, for example, estimate that 193 languages are spoken in the borough while the Milton Keynes Council has seen its language needs grow from 12 to 84 languages in a relatively short period of time. Recognising this diversity is critical to delivering accessible citizen communication that reaches citizens via their preferred channels.

Rising citizen expectations

As a result of private sector customer experience, today's citizens expect government to engage with them on their terms, via their channels and be openly available online. Today, around 70% of UK households have active access to the internet, compared with just over half in 2006; over 90 per cent of all internet users regularly send and receive email; and 78 per cent of internet users find information on goods and services online (*Source: National Statistics Omnibus Survey*).

Meanwhile, the boom in social networking means that the government cannot ignore the power of individuals to spread messages about their public service experiences. Facebook has almost 24 million users in the UK and throughout the UK, more residents are using social networks than are reading local newspapers³. Some local councils are actively using social media tools. For example, the extreme weather of early 2010 saw many councils around Britain using social media to communicate snow updates directly to the public, such as a 'Gritter Twitter', giving 24-hour updates on the roads that were being gritted.

Social network sites can enable government to not only keep audiences regularly updated but also promote open discussion. For instance, Patient Opinion (www.patientopinion.org.uk) is a website that allows NHS patients to post feedback on the service they received. Similarly, user-generated web sites aimed at scrutinising the public sector are also becoming more common, such as tools offered by charity MySociety. FixMyStreet (www.fixmystreet.com) gives citizens a simple tool to report road problems such as potholes in their area, whilst WhatDoTheyKnow (www.whatdotheyknow.com) provides an integrated web service for making Freedom of Information requests.

The digital divide

Nevertheless, for many citizens, a phone call or face-to-face communication will always be the preferred contact—and often it is the digitally excluded who may be those in most need of public services. Although the government plans to get around 60 per cent of the 12.5 million people who are not online connected to the internet by 2014 and to encourage others to use publically available access through e.g. libraries, central and local government must not only optimise the use of cheaper digital communication channels for those connected citizens, but also improve communication across traditional channels. As pointed out in the IDeA "Local by Social" report, official letters, legal jargon, complex paper forms and expensive journeys to council buildings can be just as excluding as a web browser or mobile phone. Clearly, recognising the diverse needs of UK citizens is essential to the creation of accurate and tailored citizen communications.

The Online Citizen

- **Online vehicle licensing:** In 2008/09, 17m motorists renewed or completed a vehicle tax or SORN transaction online. This resulted in a 47% take up rate based on reminders. (*Source: DVLA Annual Report 2008/09*)
- **Online self-assessment:** 6.5 million self-assessment tax returns were completed online in 2008, a 12% increase on the previous year.
- **Government web sites:** Directgov now has over 25 million visits a month, and the customer satisfaction rate for businesslink.gov.uk is over 90% (as reported in its May 2008 survey). NHS Choices attracted an average of 7.2 million visitors in 2009 (*Source: CAPITA Annual Report 2009*)
- **Social media:** 17% of local authorities have a Facebook page, 36% use Twitter and 33% use RSS feeds (*source: eGovernment Register*). Since the MySociety websites (such as FixMyStreet and Theyworkforyou) have been set up, they have helped 200,000 people write to their MP for the first time and have helped ensure the fixing of 19,000 potholes.
- **Local council websites:** Usage is rising—80 councils using the Socitm *Website take-up service* saw visitors rise by 21.7% in 2009 compared with the previous year. (*Source: Socitm*)
- **Citizen empowerment:** Local authorities have a new statutory duty to respond to paper petitions from 15 June and electronic petitions from 15 December 2010. The introduction of the new measures mean local people "can now demand" their councils to take action on issues such as underperforming schools and hospitals, drink disorder and antisocial behaviour.

Government self-service transformation

'Service Transformation means operating a more coherent, actively managed customer contact strategy across public services, so that citizens and businesses experience a more seamless and less time consuming service.....citizens and businesses should experience a personalised service that meets their specific needs, but which operates to high quality standards and is joined up across the public sector.'

Service Transformation: A better service for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the tax payer, December 2006

The Transformational Government agenda and Sir David Varney's recommendations put the use of channels at the heart of the efficiency agenda for UK government as well as driving down "avoidable-contact" and increasing the use of citizen self-service by moving service delivery to less costly online channels. Such practices have already been implemented by departments such as the DVLA and HMRC. The DWP is seeking a reduction in avoidable contact of 50% by 2011 and developing its two major online benefit applications for Jobseeker's Allowance and State Pension, looking to grow the proportion of online applications for the Jobseeker's Allowance by 2011 by up to 40%.

However, local authority web sites appear to be slower to move to self-service capabilities. According to Socitm's 2010 Better Connected report, based on its annual survey of the 433 local authority websites, 42 per cent of visitors to council web sites did not find everything they were looking for, resulting in them turning to more costly offline channels for information. With Socitm estimating that the cheapest channel by far is the web at 27 pence per transaction compared with £3.22 for the phone and £6.56 for face-to face, it clearly makes sense for local councils to invest in developing their online self-service capabilities to better meet their citizens' needs.

3 Fragmented public sector communications

Effective citizen communications in the public sector is hampered by an IT infrastructure that is saddled with legacy and disparate back-office and front-office systems.

3.1 Disparate and disjointed systems

There are several reasons why public sector organisations struggle to deliver personalised and accurate citizen communications:

Disparate print and electronic infrastructures: Many public sector organisations operate separate infrastructures for digital and printed communication. This can create challenges with respect to cost, maintenance and control of content meaning that communication across channels is rarely consistent.

Siloed service lines: The same organisations have separate lines of business for delivering multiple services to constituents. For example, local authorities provide social services support, planning services, housing benefits and environmental services, each with its own infrastructure and workflow for generating customer correspondence. This duplication of effort adds cost and often means there is no single view of the citizen across government.

Reliance on IT-developed and managed templates: Most public sector organisations rely on thousands of different IT-developed and supported templates, which may be stored in different locations, to create and deliver citizen communication. Integration with back-end systems is either non-existent or implemented through inefficient processes and expensive point projects. A multitude of incompatible templates can be costly and time consuming to manage and a lack of centralised management and administration means it is almost impossible to keep templates up-to-date. Content input by employees is not typically easily shared or re-used resulting in inconsistent and often inaccurate communication.

Manual-intensive document creation by customer-facing employees: Customer-facing employees often spend considerable time completing different types of customer documents, using paper-based forms or siloed document creation systems such as Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat. Although these tools provide the means to rapidly create user-facing documents manually, the ability to personalise them for thousands of recipients at a time is challenging, time consuming and error prone. Manual processes may include the re-keying of data, cutting and pasting content, reformatting documents and assembling multiple documents and inserts for mailing. This can lead to irrelevant or inaccurate

information being passed to the citizen, as in the case of the DVLA mentioned in section 1. Such an approach also lacks controls to ensure that legal compliance and corporate standards are met.

Manual fulfilment processes: Distributed document creation often leads to a lack of integration with production fulfilment—the assembly, printing and distribution of documents. This is because the formatting of documents may not always be compatible with the production environment, meaning documents are produced locally and then manually fulfilled. Without centralised fulfilment, the organisation may fail to meet records and archive management policies, and fail to capture lucrative bulk mail sort savings.

3.2 The impact of poor citizen communication

The use of siloed document creation and distribution systems for citizen communications can lead to unclear, inconsistent and generic communication that is not tailored to a citizen's needs or circumstances. This can have a serious impact on both the public service and the citizen's experience:

- Increased customer care costs:** Unclear, inaccurate or incomplete communication increases customer care costs due to unnecessary customer service calls. Such "avoidable contact" is usually of little value to either the citizen or the local authority. This means that a high proportion of calls could be chasing up progress on applications, seeking advice on completing forms or checking current fees. For instance, the DWP estimates that around 20 million of the 144 million contacts it received in 2009 were to chase progress, mainly about money. The problem is not confined to large central government departments. A recent analysis of calls to Stroud District Council's revenue and benefits departments showed that 90% of calls were either due to poor understanding of letters, incomplete claim forms or chasing outstanding claims. Clearly, even a small reduction in unnecessary calls can generate significant cost savings for local and central government.
- Poor branding and consistency:** Inferior communications, which do not meet departmental brand standards, may reinforce a negative experience and poor citizen perception. This is a challenge faced by many of the councils currently moving to Unitary status. Poor citizen experience around a local authority's services or plans may, for example, be readily shared using personal or social media channels, or discussed with others in the citizen's immediate contact network, leading to a rapid dissemination of poor feedback that is difficult for the authority to effectively counter.
- High print and postage costs:** A reliance on paper-based communications leads to high stationery and postage expenses along with higher fulfilment costs as a result of manual processes. With carbon footprint reduction high on the agenda for many local authorities, wasteful printing is not only costly in financial terms, but has a significant environmental impact.
- Increased IT costs:** The traditional approach of using a range of distributed solutions requiring IT resources to develop and maintain templates is costly and time consuming.
- Poor compliance:** The Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Disability Discrimination Act (2005) require local authorities to ensure that access to key information is accessible and readily available to all sections of the community. Many have invested in improving the accessibility of web sites, but the use of disparate communication systems means that few produce citizen communication documents that conform to the highest accessibility standards.

Transforming Letters in the DWP

The DWP has recognised that unclear letters have been an issue for their customers for some time, with around with 2 million customers contacting them each year because they have not understood a letter.

It estimated that in just one year they spent £7 million explaining their letters to individuals. This is without considering the cost of citizens providing the wrong information or filling in forms incorrectly based on poor understanding of what is required of them.

The DWP is working to improve its letters to customers to make them easier to understand and reduce processing times so that customers do not feel the need to make progress-chasing calls. Its "Transforming Letters" initiative⁵ seeks to improve the clarity and accuracy of their correspondence with citizens.

Source: "Department for Work and Pensions: Touchbase", www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/touchbase-57.pdf, Dec 2009

Poor communication not only has a serious impact on both the efficiency of local and central government departments, but also on the citizen's choice and use of public services:

- **Inappropriate decisions by customers:** Inaccurate information may lead to citizens making inappropriate decisions about their future financial plans or citizens not claiming something to which they are legitimately entitled.
- **Inappropriate claims by customers:** Failure to correctly advise customers of the rules of entitlement may lead to some customers claiming something to which they are not entitled. This could lead to unnecessary and wasteful processing of claims and decisions by the public sector department and the need to attempt to reclaim payments after the fact.
- **Social exclusion and confusion:** Lack of awareness of services and poor availability of information in different languages has been shown to contribute to low take-up of benefits.

These problems are reflected in a recent National Audit Office review of Pension Credit application forms and communication which highlights the confusion amongst pensioners as a result of unnecessarily complex forms and letters.

National Audit Office review of Pension Credit applications forms and communication

The Pension Credit was introduced in 2003 and is an entitlement for people aged 60 or over living in Great Britain. Total Pension Credit customers reached 2.7 million in 2007–08, with new Pension Credit claims standing at 276,000. In many cases, the customer receives a letter about State Pension, pension forecast, or a letter from Jobcentre Plus because they are coming off working age benefits which tells them they may be eligible for Pension Credit.

Flawed application forms: Some 37% of applications for Pension Credit are submitted on paper forms. According to the National Audit Office there are flaws in the design and a mismatch between the paper form and the questions used in call centre scripts. For example, there is no question on the paper form asking if the customer has specific communication needs. Some groups of customers are also required to submit more detailed evidence than those who apply by phone: postal applicants, for example, are all asked to submit savings books for verification, whereas telephone claimants are not asked to do so if they have levels of savings below a certain threshold.

Quality of communication: Some 20 per cent of claims can be handled immediately and are completed on the first phone call. Over 80 per cent of cases, however, require additional documentation, and letters requesting this information are generated by the Department's computer system using pre-prepared modules of text. An average of 2,246 additional letters is sent out each week. These letters are long and complex—on average, they are 16 sides long for a request of three additional pieces of information. The actual request for information is in the middle of the letter rather than clearly sign-posted at the start. There are also delays in issuing the letters, which often arrive at the same time as standard three week reminders generated when no activity has been logged in other internal systems.

The impact: The lack of clarity can cause both distress and confusion for pensioners, and also results in unnecessary queries and customer errors. For the DWP, it increases the number of customer service calls and claims processing times leading to lower staff productivity, which reduces efficiency.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Department for Work and Pensions data (conducted 2008). Note that revised and improved letters are now issued by DWP.

Effective citizen communication is therefore critical not only to the quality of service that a citizen receives, but also has the potential to generate efficiencies and corresponding costs savings for the public sector department.

3.3 How effective are your communications?

Government bodies should consider the following questions when evaluating how they create, produce and distribute citizen communications.

- **Are communications produced in the most cost-efficient manner?** Are multiple technologies or systems used to create, produce and deliver communications?
- **Are communications clear, personalised and relevant?** Do they communicate intelligent information on services that may be suitable for the citizen? Using individual customer data to personalise customer interaction enables additional services to be offered based on known eligibility or appropriateness. Are they available 24x7 to support rapidly growing acceptance of self-service trends?

- **Can documents be created and managed by business users rather than IT?** Traditional document composition solutions are often reliant on IT staff to create and maintain templates. Transitioning control to business users, including customer service representatives, reduces IT costs and gives more flexibility in document design.
- **Are you minimising expenditure on print, fulfilment and postage?** Transitioning paper communications to online channels can lead to significant cost savings, whilst boosting green credentials.
- **Are communications integrated across all customer touch points (e.g. web, email, call centre)?** Can a single template be used to design communication once and deliver across any channel?
- **Are communications compliant?** Do communications include appropriate content based on effective dates and jurisdictions? How easy is it to produce documents in the recipient's preferred language? How effectively does content ensure compliance with changing regulations and privacy legislation?
- **Can citizen-facing employees easily edit and view customer communications history?** Enabling front-office workers to quickly create error-free personalised correspondence, as well as viewing replicas of citizen communications, improves call-centre productivity as well as reducing call handling time.
- **How joined-up are your communications across all the different services that you deliver to your constituents?** Can you talk to constituents like you really know them? Are you able to send a single document summarising a selection of services that the constituent is claiming, rather than a separate letter for each one?

Defining communications

Any digital or printed communication with a customer which can be broadly categorised as:

- **High-volume:** transactional documents generated for a large number of citizens at one time, requiring scheduled production runs. Examples include council tax, benefits statements and bills.
- **Event-driven (On-demand) communications** are low volume documents. These documents can then be produced in a similar way to high volume or batch documents, but at a lower volume.
- **Interactive communications:** Unlike documents generated by automated back-office systems, such as bills and other correspondence, front-office communications rely on manual input and interactions between office workers and customers.

How CCM can support joined-up services

One of the key enablers of joined-up government is a move away from the traditional silos of public service operation towards a shared services approach, which can reduce both back- and front-office costs. By removing duplication and inconsistency within these silos, public sector agencies can reduce costs as well as improve processes. Of course, achieving effective joined-up communication relies on reliable and high quality citizen data in order to communicate new legislation, benefits awareness schemes, citizens advice or public service availability to the right citizen at the right time.

Over the past few years, the private sector has taken a joined-up view of processing transactional communications. For instance, some financial services companies produce compound statements for customers of multiple services such as mortgages, loans, investments and current accounts. Each separate division prepares and delivers their data to a central CCM platform and the communications engine publishes a compound document summarising a customer's relationship with the bank.

If such aggregation can be achieved in the public sector, the cost savings can be immense. Particularly, for those departments that already collaborate to deliver services to citizens (such as local authorities, DWP, HMRC and the Home Office), separate departments could send their data to a central shared CCM infrastructure to consolidate and publish joined up correspondence for individual citizens. The cost reduction in stationery, postage and paper from consolidating communications in this way are considerable, whether it's using TransPromo to better inform citizens in one transactional document, gaining efficiencies around using multiple print service providers (PSPs) or sending one single document that summarises all relevant services for an individual citizen.

Some public sector organisations are addressing these questions by implementing a unified customer communications platform which can manage the creation, management and distribution of communications, regardless of the service being delivered or delivery channel. In doing so, organisations are meeting the expectations of their increasingly demanding and diverse constituents, but also reducing costs, improving turnaround times and mitigating security vulnerabilities.

4 The way forward: unified customer communications management (CCM)

CCM enables public sector organisations to quickly produce personalised cost-effective communications on demand, interactively and in high-volume batch for delivery via print, email or the web (Figure 1).

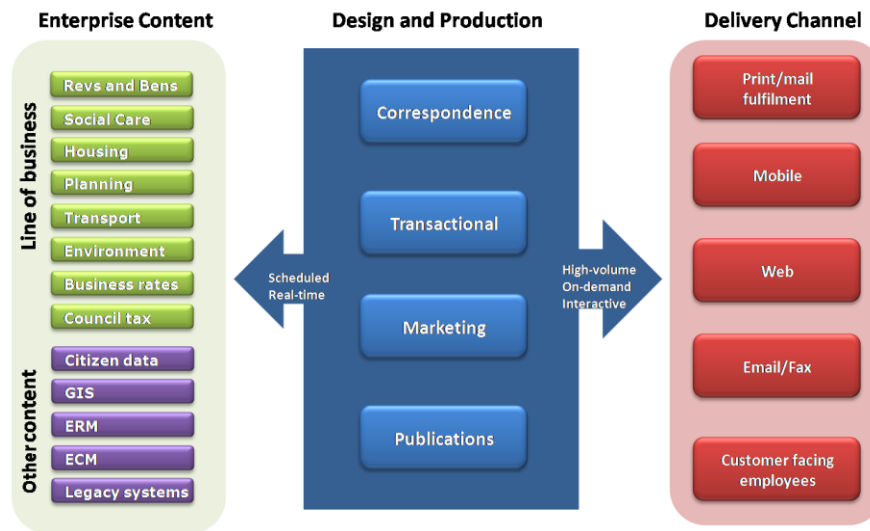


Figure 1: Integrated CCM (source: HP)

The use of consistent, relevant and approved content is achieved through document composition technology that enables organisations to reach the right citizen with the right message in the right format. Communications such as tax notifications, driving licence documentation, court correspondence and NHS appointments can all be created using a single template that can be published in batch, real-time or web environments.

4.1 Key CCM capabilities

The components of a unified CCM platform include:

Data integration: A significant proportion of correspondence is highly regulated, in terms of content as well as branding. To ensure conformance to regulations and branding consistency, the content that comprises correspondence must be managed centrally and stored so that it is easily navigable, searchable, versioned, styled and approved for use. In addition to managing content, the constituent data that drives the personalisation of content must be cleansed, segmented and mined to extract relevant information from existing customer data. CCM can directly access content from the major departmental and shared systems (such as CRM and ERP) to create personalised communications, eliminating the need for systems that consolidate and reformat disparate data. Data integration is vital to creating a single view of the citizen. When obtaining public services, whether in health care, education or welfare, the ability to easily and accurately verify a claimant's identity and entitlement to the service makes it faster and more convenient to understand whether they should receive benefits, while it also reduces administrative costs and waste from fraud, creating more value to citizens from the benefits programmes themselves.

Template design: Personalised correspondence such as tax forms, licensing notifications or council bills are created using document automation software. This provides design tools for creating document templates that can be merged with citizen data to produce personalised correspondence in high volume. By incorporating document template variables and rules, content can be personalised.

HMRC Annual Coding Notices

Each year the Department is required by law to issue notification of the rate of tax it plans to apply to users of the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system. This required the issue of 2.9 million new coding notices to be sent to customers in September 2008. The issue of these notices has historically resulted in large numbers of telephone calls as customers either did not understand the notice fully or did not understand what, if anything, was required of them⁴.

In 2009, in addition to re-designing the notices to make them clearer, the team introduced an automated telephone message to explain their coding notice and what it meant to customers. These actions saved over 100,000 calls into contact centres and, through signposting, doubled the number of hits on improved HMRC web pages.

Additionally, “white space” capabilities (areas in communications where there is no standard text, leaving unused space) enable customer communication to include timely and relevant offers or messages that offer additional services. This enables government departments to leverage existing documents to promote other new and relevant services, and to potentially generate additional revenues. An example would be leveraging the council tax bill to promote library and leisure centre services to families with young children. Collaboration and built-in approval workflow allows business users to create personalised documents using a controlled editing environment, reducing the potential for manual errors.

Document generation: A CCM platform is built on a server-based document generation engine that can deliver high volumes of real time personalised communication for print, email and online delivery. Publishing components should support a rules engine to execute business logic for customised content creation, a document composition engine that formats documents for a broad set of formats such as PDF, HTML, AFP, Postscript and plain text and a highly scalable engine for running high-volume batch document production processes.

Interactive documents: These documents support front-office activity, such as claims processing, or requests for services. Intelligent interactive document templates eliminate cumbersome manual processes that are not integrated with back-office workflows. Customer-facing staff are guided through an interactive document with context sensitive help, with certain sections of the template automatically populated with approved content. Other areas can allow personalised text and graphics, while automatic revision tracking speeds the approval process. The approved document can be submitted for automated records management and archival, used to update departmental systems, and drive automated fulfilment for the customer.

On-demand publishing: Some CCM platforms use the same engine to produce personalised communications in both very high volumes (millions at a time) and on demand (one at a time). On-demand documents may be initiated by a real-time web-based system or other in-house customer system, supporting the capabilities required for providing self-service web pages. An example would be a request for a copy of a birth or marriage certificate, or a statement of expected value of state pension at a future date.

Automated production and fulfilment: Document production capabilities maximise high-volume delivery efficiency by controlling postage weights, preparing data for postal sort, driving inserters and householding documents. CCM offers capabilities to build output files for delivery through nearly any print or electronic channel—for example, colour print, black-and-white print and email channels. Intelligent documents can be output in any format (such as AFP, PDF, Postscript etc.) or language, and used as templates to drive delivery of personalised documents.

4.2 CCM Benefits

By eliminating existing document creation silos, a single platform can lead to reduced costs and ensures consistency across all communications. CCM enables public sector organisations to:

- **Enhance service delivery to citizens:** Faster, clearer and more relevant communications improves the citizen’s experience and increases satisfaction. It will also lead to a reduced number of costly calls to call centres.
- **Reduce operating costs:** Eliminating point solutions for correspondence can reduce the cost of developing and supporting the number of document templates—Quocirca has seen that a single platform can reduce the number of templates by up to 80%. Delivering communications to cheaper online channels can minimise printing, paper, stationery and postage costs. Providing citizens with more web-based self service options also reduces service costs associated with dealing with citizen requests.
- **Enhance multichannel communication:** Intelligent document design enables communications to use a single template that can be formatted for delivery across any channel—email, online self service web pages, mobile devices or contact centre.
- **Reduce errors:** Centralised interactive document creation provides a controlled editing experience for front-office users, reducing errors and ensuring accuracy.
- **Improve front-office productivity:** Front-line workers gain real-time access to customer information through interactive document completion and better visibility of a citizen’s communication history. Enabling front-office staff to quickly create error-free personalised correspondence improves call-centre productivity as well as reducing call-handling time.
- **Increase creation and delivery time of communications:** Highly personalised communications can be created with accuracy and speed, and approval processes are accelerated through automatic revision tracking and change review capabilities.
- **Ensure accuracy and regulatory compliance:** Using document automation tools with business rules ensures compliance to internal and external policies, while audit trails and integration with central records management systems help ensure document security.
- **Provide a single view of the citizen:** When CCM is integrated across public services it is possible to integrate communication on the basis of a common view of the citizen. Front-office workers are able to see customer

history, meaning that every citizen interaction becomes relevant and contextual as it is based on knowledge of the existing citizen relationship with that public service. Better advice can be provided, and fewer errors caused by lack of understanding of contextual relationships between different areas are experienced.

- **Leverage existing documents as an opportunity to talk to citizens about other services:** In December 2009, the Department for Communities and Local Government introduced regulations to make the requirement to include efficiency information for the relevant council, Fire and Rescue Authority and Police authority on bills applicable from 2010–11 onwards. Including efficiency savings information on council bills information can help citizens understand the value for money of their services. Similarly, including information on eligibility for additional benefits on notification letters can help drive local authority benefits take-up strategy. Benefits and statement letters can also be used to promote other outreach services provided by local partners.

5 CCM in practice

This use case scenario highlights how a local authority council can use CCM to drive its housing benefit and council tax benefit take-up strategy and improve the benefits application process for both citizens and front-line workers.

5.1 Use case scenario: driving benefits take-up strategy with CCM

Background

Housing benefit is paid to around 4.5 million households across Great Britain. Housing and council tax benefits are administered by local authority councils on behalf of the DWP. A key objective of ABC's city council Benefits Service is to make rent and tax payers aware of not only the Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) schemes but also to encourage the take-up of other benefits they may be entitled to claim. Overall, ABC's "take-up strategy" is based around key objectives that include identifying vulnerable/hard-to-reach customers in order to provide assistance in claiming benefits; identify communities and areas and reasons for low take-up of benefits and address issues through targeted campaigns and promotions; and improve customer service advice on claiming benefits and work closely with service partners and government agencies.

Challenges faced by ABC city council

Processing times for housing benefit applications are taking on average in excess of 30 days and is a frustrating process for both staff and citizens. The application process is largely paper-based and relies heavily on manual checking processes resulting in long claims processing times. Entitlement letters are created using Microsoft Word, meaning letters are often error-prone and not controlled. When ABC council analysed the calls, visits and emails into their housing benefit service they discovered that 90% of calls were due to customers chasing claims, telling them that they did not understand the letters or incomplete claim forms. ABC council does not offer online application services (other than for downloading pdfs), despite its customer research showing that 80% of residents have daily access to private internet and all residents have access to free internet in council libraries.

Using interactive and intelligent claims forms

A new online housing benefit application form has been designed using interactive CCM document automation, which uses a single template to publish the form in both printed and online format. The interactive application form automatically pre-populates sections of the form, reducing both the number of required key strokes and the time required for a citizen to complete the form. In addition to data pre-population the online form also provides comprehensive automated business logic, ensuring that claimants are only directed to relevant sections of the online form based on the information they have provided. A detailed checklist of required documentation is automatically generated, and relevant supplementary web forms are automatically despatched and/or a web address is provided.

Online form data is used to populate back-office benefits databases. Integration with back-office databases provides the capability to promote eligibility for the other benefits available to citizens, as well as information on other local public services which may be relevant to that citizen (such as those provided by partner organisations). Forms can be completed by customer service agents on the telephone or at council offices and is also compatible with mobile devices, which means that visiting officers can complete forms and wirelessly synchronise claimant data in real-time with internal office systems to deliver a fully mobile service to citizens, using electronic signatures to obtain authorisation. A single template is used to design the online and paper form, and it can also be published in multiple languages for those areas of the community where English is not the first spoken language.

Benefits gained

Citizens can now submit online benefits applications 24/7 more accurately and reliably, and self guided help means online applicants are less likely to need support. Online applications can also find out if they are entitled to income support, pension or tax credits which helps increase uptake of benefits for eligible citizens. Automated business logic means forms are completed more accurately and, because the form directly populates the back-office system, there is no need for the re-keying of data, preventing errors and improving accuracy. Fewer errors has resulted in a faster turnaround time, so ABC council can now process claims significantly faster, even with the additional workload caused by the economic downturn. Also, staff that were originally dedicated to manually checking forms can be released to focus on citizen-facing activities.

5.2 Case study: DVLA reduces costs and delivers highly customised communications

Background

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is one of the United Kingdom's largest public service operations. It employs more than 5,600 staff and its statutory objectives include issuing and maintaining driving licences for the UK, vehicle registration and renewal and facilitating police and intelligence authority investigations into vehicle-related crime. Each year, the DVLA issues over seven million driving licences, 18 million registration certificates and collects £5.4 billion (latest figures from 2007–2008) in vehicle excise duties.

The challenge

In 2005, the DVLA realised that being able to respond more rapidly to the need for document changes and delivery was mission critical for the agency and decided to move its outsourced production operation in-house. The strategic decision was made to improve the efficiency and flexibility of its document creation and delivery processes and a team was formed to manage the massive conversion project. The primary requirement was software that would be able to handle extremely large volumes of different, personalised documents. Any technology that was introduced would have to easily integrate with existing systems and any new technologies and equipment that would be implemented in the future.

The solution

HP Exstream was selected due to its ability to create any type of personalised document and it had the performance and capabilities needed to handle very high volumes of variable output within tight timeframes. The first application developed was the Harmonised Registration Certificate, commonly known as the logbook—a registration certificate required for all vehicles in the UK. The DVLA had to replace some 33 million documents in line with new European regulations issued in 2004/2005. In addition to the new registration documents, the DVLA had to continue to produce routine daily documents where volumes could reach up to 100,000 items a day. The phased transition of document applications to Exstream included monthly tax reminders, numbering up to 3.8 million documents every month. In addition, the DVLA now uses HP Exstream to produce the individual printed sheets that accompany UK driving licences. It generates 30,000 of these a day and has now embarked on the huge job of sending out thousands of ten year renewal reminders for photocard driving licences each day.

The facility to re-tax cars over the internet is a flagship project and another significant success story for the DVLA. Linked to the accompanying database, HP Exstream is used to overprint the tax discs with the owner's unique details and, at its peak, generates 190,000 copies a day from internet applications. The DVLA plans to migrate all high-volume applications to Exstream by 2011.

The benefits

HP Exstream has accelerated the time for DVLA to develop, test and change new document applications, especially with the ability to reuse design components across multiple applications. Because of its ability to create any type of personalised document, the DVLA could easily integrate it into its existing operations and it also provides the performance and capabilities it needed to handle very high volumes of variable output within tight timeframes. HP Exstream's ability to support bilingual requirements from a single application design creates big savings in stationery and handling. The DVLA has gained greater efficiency and cost savings with the utilisation of duplex printing and the ability to move to plain reeled stationery instead of pre-printed stationery.

6 Conclusion

The combination of long-term challenges such as the ageing population, increasing pressures and demands on services and a contraction of public spending is an opportunity for public sector bodies to drive efficiency improvements and reduce waste, which will have a positive impact on service delivery. The creation and delivery of citizen communication is one area where the public sector should take advantage of more innovative and flexible tools such as customer communications management (CCM).

Although citizens' needs cut across central, regional and local government, joined-up communication across these demarcations is hampered by disconnected communication around specific government functions. The silo-based approach to IT investment across government departments has led to duplication and inefficiency, with no common view of the relationship between the public sector and citizen. The public sector remains a long way from operating the integrated citizen identity management models that are necessary for this single view.

A key focus on driving citizen service transformation must be the move towards an integrated IT and back-office service architecture across all parts of local and central government. With the move towards cloud computing, increased mobility along with regulatory pressures, a service-oriented approach to public sector citizen communications opens up greater scope to achieve large-scale efficiency while improving service delivery. This means the use of web services to offer simplified access for citizens with diverse needs, delivering multichannel communication in line with an effective digital inclusion strategy, reducing costs through increases in self-service automation and lowering infrastructure duplication.

CCM should be viewed as a long term strategy that takes a phased approach to implementation. Government should prioritise those citizen services which rely on bespoke or outdated communications systems, which can be delivered quickly at low cost and minimal risk. The public sector must take action now to improve the effectiveness of its communication across all channels in order to enable the strategic shift towards a citizen-centric service transformation.

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About HP

HP, the world's largest technology company, simplifies the technology experience for consumers and businesses with a portfolio that spans printing, personal computing, software, services and IT infrastructure. More information about HP (NYSE: HPQ) is available at <http://www.hp.com/>.

HP Exstream is a fully integrated software platform for creating, managing and delivering all constituent communications across the agency. From letters and forms completed interactively by agency workers, to personalised text, email and web self-service documents generated in real time, to fully customised batch communications produced in high volumes, HP Exstream saves millions of pounds a year by eliminating point solutions, streamlining document processes, and significantly reducing paper and postage. HP Exstream also ensures compliance and improves response by delivering clearer, fully customised communications through the constituent's preferred channel and in their language.

Additional information regarding HP Exstream is available at www.hpexstream.co.uk or contact us at exstream.info@hp.com.



About Quocirca

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With worldwide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first-hand experience of ITC delivery, who continuously research and track the industry in the following key areas:

- Business process evolution and enablement
- Enterprise solutions and integration
- Business intelligence and reporting
- Communications, collaboration and mobility
- Infrastructure and IT systems management
- Systems security and end-point management
- Utility computing and delivery of IT as a service
- IT delivery channels and practices
- IT investment activity, behaviour and planning
- Public sector technology adoption and issues
- Integrated print management

Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption—the personal and political aspects of an organisation’s environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to advise on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business-orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca’s mission is to help organisations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time. Quocirca has a proactive primary research programme, regularly surveying users, purchasers and resellers of ITC products and services on emerging, evolving and maturing technologies. Over time, Quocirca has built a picture of long-term investment trends, providing invaluable information for the whole of the ITC community.

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The logo for Quocirca, featuring the word "quocirca" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The letters "qu" are in blue, "o" is in red, "c" is in black, "i" is in red, "r" is in black, "c" is in black, and "a" is in red.