

iTouch Vision

The ultimate guide to channel shift

This document gives an overview of the different approaches to channel shift and discusses the different strategies that can be deployed.

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Introduction to channel shift

A channel strategy explains how an organisation will meet the demands of its customers/citizens using the resources it has available bearing in mind the needs of the customer/citizen.

In this chapter we will discuss how an organisation should plan and design a strategy for the contact channels it will use to deliver services.



What is a channel strategy?

An organisation's Channel Strategy is a plan for the contact channels it will use to deliver services to, and interact with, its customers or citizens. A channel strategy explains how an organisation will meet the demands of its citizens using the resources it has available bearing in mind the needs of the citizen.

A channel strategy's worth will not just be an organisation's ability to set out on paper a strategic approach to customer contact management, real success will be improved experiences for customers or citizens as they use services, greatly increased value for money in service delivery in times of growing economic constraint, and a clear demonstration that the public sector is a confident operator in the new digital age.

How does this affect you?

Whilst Organisations and local authorities are not compelled to produce a channel strategy document or even operate with any forethought as to the contact channels made available to their customers, it is clearly in the interest of all stakeholders that a deliberate strategy is in place.

We are aware that many businesses, local and national government authorities have prepared channel strategy

documents or are considering preparing such papers. We are keen to avoid unnecessary work and duplication and to this end we are producing this paper to allow you to easily produce a strategy by either adopting this paper in its entirety or to add your own strategic direction.

Each Organisation or government authority has a responsibility to provide excellent services to their customers and the public and value for money to the taxpayer or client base. The channels through which services are delivered and by which the customers have contact with the authority, (be that via telephone, online, in person, or via other means), are a critical part of the service provision, and there is an ongoing impetus for them to be managed effectively and efficiently for everyone.

A channel strategy is an organisation's plan for the channels it will use to deliver services to, and interact with, its customers. A channel strategy explains how an organisation will meet the contact demands of its customers using the resources it has available bearing in mind the needs of the customer. A channel strategy is not simply a plan to move service provision to online channels

Why is a channel strategy important now?

Customers receive a high standard of customer service from many public and private sector organisations. However, citizens sometimes have low expectations of services provided by local government, and it will be necessary to exceed rather than meet these expectations to achieve channel shift to cheaper and more effective channels. To achieve this, the your organisation or public sector must continue to raise its own standards of service across all the channels it uses and offers.

In order to meet the needs of customers we must provide services that are:

- Easily accessible
- Simple to use
- Streamlined
- Convenient
- Cost effective
- Robust

It is also important to bear in mind the target audience's access to technology, the type and complexity of the contact, their personal preferences as well their skill sets when selecting channels.

Rising Internet use and customer expectations of accessing public services online present an ongoing opportunity for public service providers. Competent online services are easy and quick to use, available whenever customers need them and have a relatively low administrative burden.

Managed well, online access to services is a very effective channel with considerable benefits for customers and taxpayers.

The public sector must however also meet the needs of people who do not have access to the Internet. 'Digital Inclusion' therefore is a core element of any government or public sector channel strategy.

Citizens and customers will be using data released by your organisation and other public sector organisations, so a set of web services that will allow access to this data will be required to build supplementary services.

Key considerations

The process of developing and implementing a channel strategy needs to be guided by insight, and insight specifically relating to:

- The citizen or customer.
- The services an organisation is providing and each service area in question
- The current delivery channels at the councils disposal as well as those that may be available to be used in the future
- Other council-specific micro/macro factors that may have an impact on service provision and delivery

It is also important to understand the wider online services market, as expectations of online services are driven by customer experiences of using similar services of other organisations.

What are the Organisational challenges?

In considering a channel strategy, there is often a considerable challenge and change to existing organisational structures. A channel strategy needs to become an integral part of the structure of the organisation and the way the objectives of the organisation are realised. It cannot be super-imposed or retrofitted onto existing practices and as such is likely to require or precipitate considerable organisational change.

We also need to recognise that people will use different channels not just for different types of interactions, but also to suit their own convenience. Particularly at local level, an integrated channel strategy is required that takes into account the varied ways in which local people may want to interact with the council.

Let citizens use their channel of choice

We live in a multi-channel world, with customers using email, the web, social media, drop in centres, phone and mobile during different phases of the process. Reducing choice, for example by cutting out the ability to email, will frustrate and annoy your customers or citizens – as is making them change channels.

One company surveyed responded to an email by calling and while they provided an accurate answer it felt both unnecessary and intrusive. Respond to customers via their channel of choice rather than what is convenient for the organisation.

As a rule of thumb you should respond via the method they contacted you.

Basic Principles & Scope

To outline the broad principles for the ways in which your organisation will deliver its services through a range of contact channels that provide better value for money, are more accessible and are designed with the customer or citizen in mind.



What is the purpose of a strategy?

A Channel shift's strategy is to outline the broad principles for the ways in which your organisation will deliver its services through a range of contact channels that provide better value for money, are more accessible and are designed with the customer or citizen in mind.

Scope

This strategy document sets out the basic principles by which you will deliver your services to the public or customers through the contact channels currently available.

Contact channels in scope include:

- Face to face
- Email
- Kiosks
- Websites
- Digital TV
- Telephone
- Mobile apps and mobile web

- SMS text messaging
- Automated telephone technology
- Web chat
- Post

This document focuses on three key types of contacts between the organisation and the citizen or customer.

- Transactions - e.g. registering a birth, reporting a problem or paying a bill.
- Interactions - e.g. obtaining advice, public consultations, petitioning.
- Information - cycle maps, leaflets.

This strategy should be relevant to the nature of the services provided by the organisation and ensure that its services are provided through a range of contact channels appropriate to the customers individual needs and preferences in a non-discriminatory way.

Channel hierarchy & design principles

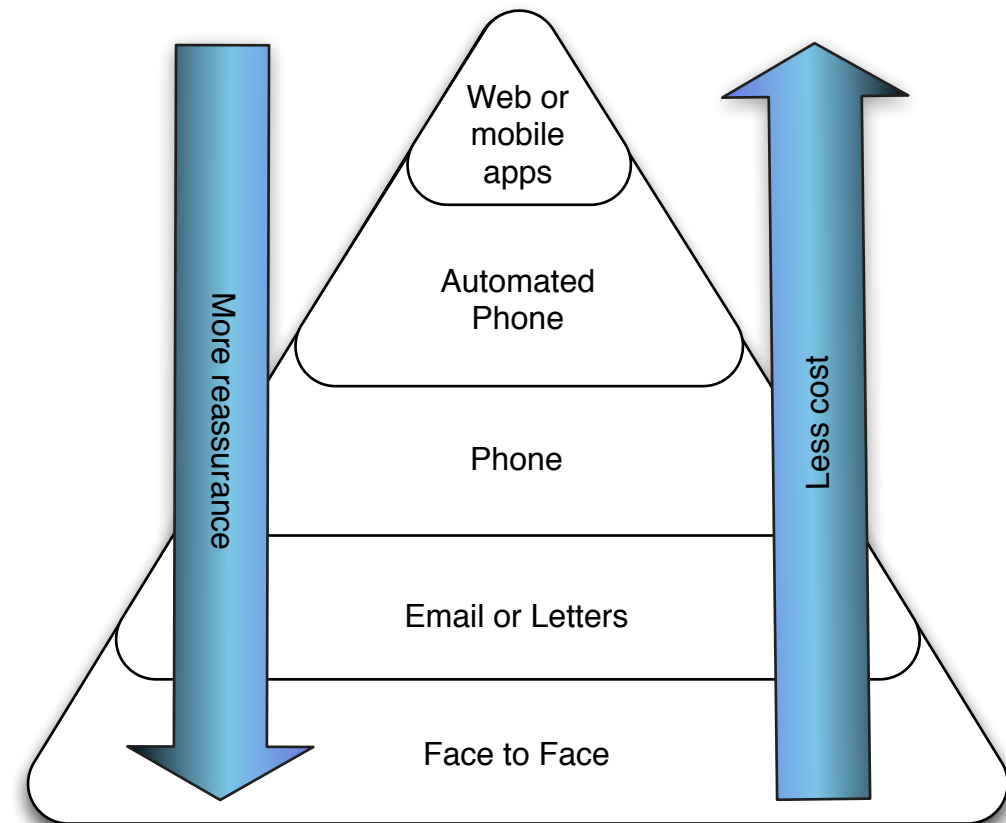
The choice of contact channels available to the public is growing all of the time as new technologies are developed and released. In the last 5 years we have seen the emergence and growth of channels such as digital social, mobile Internet, interactive TV and more recently mobile phone applications.

Without a channel strategy many organisations typically adopt one of two approaches to using these channels by either.

1. Launching all of their products and services on all new channels without much thought to the relevance and cost of doing so, or.
2. Focusing on switching their customer contact to the cheapest channel (often assumed to be the internet) without much thought as to the relevance of this channel to their entire customer base.

How do we position each channel?

There is a generally accepted model for the effectiveness of the major channels of contact.



What this model shows is that as we move up the triangle the cost of delivery typically gets cheaper for the organisation. However for some types of contact a greater level of human contact is required, particularly for contacts that require some level of reassurance.

Imagine you've received a letter asking you to pay a bill or the bailiffs will turn up at your house. You've just paid the bill and now want reassurance that your personal belongings are safe. You are unlikely to log on and have a look at the organisation's website's FAQ page for reassurance (even though this might be the most cost-effective solution for the organisation) but you may be more inclined to ring up the contact centre to request a letter confirming that matters are in hand. In this example, there may be a case for having online FAQs relating to debt recovery in terms of best practice, but there is probably little chance of shifting this individual contact online

It is therefore vital to fully understand each type of contact and the level of reassurance that the customer is likely to require before focusing the organisation's efforts on the design of any contact channel for that service.

But of course the conundrum doesn't end there. There may be little hope of shifting the channels that a certain group uses if that group simply doesn't access that channel. For example, Internet penetration is currently very low amongst the jobless, the financially excluded, older people and people who do not read or speak English – all traditionally high users of Social Care services.

Therefore, it may not be a good use of corporate time, and taxpayer's money, to attempt to shift these Social Care contacts online. Conversely, mobile telephone penetration is very high amongst teenagers, so SMS messaging might be a good channel

to advise of last minute secondary school closures in bad weather. Customer insight goes a long way in the design of any channel strategy.

There are unfortunately even more factors to consider including “channel hopping”, (an individual's propensity to use different channels for the same transaction depending on what is convenient to them at the time) and the public's increasing confidence in new channels that develops over years and sometimes months, creating a continually changing landscape.

The key factors to an effective channel strategy therefore would be.

Detail

The deliberate design of the channel strategy for each type of service, bearing in mind the level of human interaction required and the needs of the targeted customer base.

Fluidity

The constant reviewing of the effectiveness of the channel strategy for each type of contact bearing in mind changing technologies, channel hopping and changing customer habits.

Simplicity

The optimum channels for the organisation should be the easiest to use for the customer to drive a shift in customer behaviour.

Inclusion

No group should be denied access to a service because of disability, language or cost of the access channel (e.g. mobile phone costs, broadband access). Options should be made available other than the organisation's preferred method of contact.

Cost effectiveness

Particularly in the current economic climate, finding ways in which to deliver services effectively but at lower cost will be increasingly important. A study has put the average cost of face-to-face transactions at £8.62 each, those via telephone at £2.83 and those via a website or mobile app at 5p.

Principals

Responding to your customers

Customers want to know that you've received their query and when to expect a response. While just under half (49%) of companies acknowledged inbound emails, just 39% gave an (often generous) timescale for replying. Yet only 69% of these kept their promises and responded within their timescale, meaning nearly a third failed to meet their own deadlines. This basic inability shows a lack of resources – companies simply can't deal with emails as quickly as they want to.

Don't force people to use a channel

The NAO looked at 20 public services and found the main reasons for lower take-up to cheaper channels were: a preference for face-to-face dealings; an unwillingness to provide information online; and low awareness of some online services.

Provide all channels and ensure at channel contact advice of using the next cheapest channel. Gradual uptake of the channels is a better approach rather than forcing people which will either just phone the council or voice their issues on social media.

Email is still important

Despite the rise of social media, email is still a vital channel for citizens. It provides a written record of correspondence, particularly when asking more complex queries, giving an audit trail of activity.

Email use is growing with devices such as smartphones and tablets providing new opportunities to quickly communicate with the council.

But research shows that email customer service is in crisis. Faced by a deluge of emails, many councils are simply shutting the channel, forcing them to call contact centres with their queries.

There was a 10% drop in councils providing email between 2011 and 2012, meaning that 23% of councils are essentially slamming the door in the face of citizens by removing their channel of choice.

For those that do allow people to email them, performance was worse across the board, with fewer accurate responses provided and a longer average time to reply. This points to a fundamental mismatch between the resources that companies are dedicating to email and the demand for answers.

Rather than force customers onto other channels, councils need to adopt a smarter approach to email. Technology that can help agents by analysing incoming emails and suggesting responses from a knowledge base increases accuracy and speeds up replies. Workflow that automatically delivers queries to a free agent balances the load across the contact centre.

Speed counts

Citizens today want things done yesterday. When they communicate via a channel they should be given a reference number, and response how long their query or request will take. It is important to set the expectation as soon as possible. For example a freedom of information request (FOI) can take up to 30 days. If the citizen is not aware of this they will become disgruntled after a few days, as they will be expecting a response. Try to automate responses based on the request type.

Social media, don't ignore it

Social media use has firmly reached the mass market. Over 63% of the UK population is on Facebook, with the amount of time they spend on the social network increasing. Some councils are now receiving ten times as many hits on their Facebook and

twitter pages as on their website. Twitter usage has rocketed, with over 340 million tweets sent every day and new blogs are being published every minute.

Social media gives everyone a voice. While originally they may have used social networks to talk to friends or family, they are now sharing their views on councils and the service they receive from them – in real time, all around the world.

The rise of social media is both a challenge and an opportunity for councils. While in the past citizens communicated with council on private channels (such as email, phone or letter) they are now stating their views in public, in front of a potential worldwide audience of millions.

Essentially social media hands them a megaphone that lets them complain instantly to everyone they know – and even those they don't as they can reach people outside their immediate networks. And with the media increasingly monitoring Twitter and Facebook to spot breaking stories, what might have been a minor issue can suddenly explode into front-page news.

Things to remember

1. **Make it simple**

Citizens don't want to fight to get information and request services. You need to provide self-service ways to allow them to do things themselves; it should be straightforward and easy to use.

2. **Make it mobile**

Mobile Internet use will double by the end of 2016. Review your mobile strategy and ensure you provide every service you provide through standard channels.

3. **Be social with customer service**

Make sure you have a presence on the right social networks and are using them for service as well as informing citizens.

4. **Let citizens share their experiences**

Integrate your systems with social media to allow your citizens to share their experiences.

5. **Be consistent across all your channels**

Multiple channels shouldn't mean multiple sources of information. Invest in a multi-channel platform that underpins all channels to ensure consistent and efficient service.

6. **We live in a multichannel world**

Let customers choose the channel they want to use to contact

you through – don't force them off channels such as the web but give them options across all channels.

7. **Be joined up**

Nothing annoys citizens more than having to repeat themselves – ensure their service history spans all channels so they don't have to keep re-entering details of their query.

8. **Capture information**

Use forms to help turn basic questions into intelligent communications that can be quickly routed to the best person to solve their problem.

9. **Learn from your customers**

Look at your channels through your citizens' eyes. Monitor the questions they ask and use this information to improve content and services.

Channel shift strategies

There are five areas you need to consider before you select what strategy to follow. The unique nature of the different demographics of your customers are a key considerations in the development of a channel strategy.



How to define your strategy

To begin even designing your strategy you must understand the demography of your citizens. There are five areas you need to consider before you select what strategy to follow. The unique nature of your customers are a key consideration in the development of a channel strategy.

These areas will not necessarily define your strategy but they will tell you what you need to do before you can fully implement it.

1. Finance

You will need to understand the financial impact of your citizens or customers. Less well off people may not have broadband access and a computer to connect to the Internet, there may be a greater need for face-to-face contact. On the other hand they may have mobile phones and a 3G connection. If the citizen is well off they may have broadband, laptops and smart phone, but they may prefer to use the PC to a mobile device.

2. Location

If your council is mostly rural, there may be a lack of broadband coverage, or there may be poor 3G coverage.

3. Age

If you have more citizens between 18-48 they will be more inclined and happy to use the Internet. But the older generations will prefer telephone or face-to-face contact.

4. Education

This can be a difficult one to judge, but very generally speaking a higher educated population will try to research the issue first and will use the digital methods to contact a council.

5. Language

Language can be a huge barrier; if your information is only in English then you will be stopping a non-English language person from accessing this information. And if your contact centre is also English only then effectually you are offering no way for the citizen to communicate with you.

Overarching channel strategy

If this were business you would call this your mission statement.

Before you start the strategy you need to define your organisation's overall channel strategy. These will be high level statements in which detailed actions can underpin.

This can include statements like the following

1. We will make access to our services available through appropriate and cost effective contact channels designed with the needs and preferences of our customers and council taxpayers in mind.
2. We will seek to encourage greater usage of the most effective contact methods, by creating a series of deliberate and targeted channel shifts.
3. We will not discriminate against any individual by limiting the choice of contact methods available.
4. We will offer feedback to the customer to acknowledge we have received their service request.
5. We will ensure the first person who receives the request is the overall owner to ensure that the action is complete and the citizen is informed.

How to ensure the strategy is defined

Define an owner

It is important to define an owner for the strategy, someone who can manage the whole task of gathering inputs and compiling the document. Without an owner progress will stumble and you will not achieve the desired outcome.

Define an review period

The strategy is not a document you create then put in the cupboard, it is a living document that defines a road map, that needs updating as your thought process changes, or technologies evolve.

It is important to define a review period, where you will look at what you have achieved, and where it has not been so successful. The strategy should be constantly evolving and a formal review and re-publishing of this document should occur on a quarterly basis.

Define the governance of each channel

It is highly likely that it may be desirable to make some structural changes within your organisation in order to optimize your various channels.

For example we feel that a contact centre should include the management of all channels due to the high level of customer contact coming through these channels. Within the contact center we would advise an owner is assigned to each channel.

For each of the following areas you must define an owner.

- Telephone/Contact Centre
- Website
- Email – Generic
- Letters – Generic
- SMS
- Face to Face
- Mobile apps
- Digital TV
- Mobile apps

You must also define high-level owners that will manage overall delivery such the Head of Customer Services or Customer Service Improvement Manager.

- Accessibility
- Avoidable Contact
- Channel Shift
- Performance measures

Measuring and managing the success of this strategy

It is important to define measurements so you can assess the success of your strategy. Define milestones and assess the volumes of calls and service requests.

A few options of how you can measure success are as follows.

1. The “exit pages” and transaction abandonment on the website should be analysed each month to see where transactions are failing and corrections made accordingly
2. You should compare the effectiveness and usage of different channels for each service and seek to shift contacts to the most appropriate channels.
3. Business cases should be prepared to move more transactions online (including information transactions), that take into account the dual benefits to the public, and ease of use in the contact centre

Why should we minimise avoidable contact?

Local authorities are fundamental points of contact for the citizen when seeking access to public services. They provide key

services for their local communities that greatly affect the quality of life for individual citizens and the overall community.

The customer experience for both citizens and businesses when contacting their local council should be one, which is responsive, timely and efficient.

However, both local authorities and their customers also have limited resources and want to interact as efficiently as possible. By identifying customer contact that is ‘avoidable’, the local authority and its partners are better placed to redesign the way services and information are made more accessible for their customers, so they do not have to make unnecessary, valueless contacts which are both frustrating for the customer and inefficient for the provider.

You should work with your partners and internal departments to design processes that reduce the need for customers to make contact with the public sector multiple times to complete one transaction. For example notifying a change of address once, rather than contacting multiple agencies, paying for school meals

by direct debit instead of by cheque each term or chasing up progress on a reported incident or fault.

Some actions to reduce unnecessary contact

1. Document each process using swim lanes and identify each touch point. Then review how this can be changed.
2. Look at your payment process, and see if you can move regular payments to direct debits.
3. Look at automating appointments by allowing citizens manage their own appointments.
4. Look at printed communication methods and see whether you can go paperless or digital.
5. We will work with partner organisations in the public and voluntary sector to streamline services to eliminate multiple customer contacts with multiple organisations.
6. To constantly improve the number of customer queries that we are able to resolve first time on the telephone to prevent the need for a repeat call

What is Channel Shift?

Channel Shift is the process by which organisations seek to encourage customers to access, or interact with, services via channels other than those to which they normally choose.

Deliberate channel shift is the design and marketing of effective and efficient channels because they are the most appropriate channels for the type of contact, customer and organisation in question. Channel shift forms one part of an overall channel strategy, and implemented well it can lower costs, build reputation, empower the citizen and improve the overall service proposition.

Shifting customers to particular channels involves behaviour change on the citizen's part, but once they are aware of the channels available, they will use the one that works best for them.

To encourage residents to shift to new and more effective channels by a number of means, the following options should be considered.

1. On each contact the advisor will suggest other channels where the can receive the same service.

2. At key council locations advertisements shall be placed to inform citizens about the other channels
3. Whilst on hold when calling the contact center you can provide information about the other channels.
4. Wherever possible, our staff will use the public website to transact in their day to day work to ensure that the site is fit for purpose for our residents
5. More engaging content will be placed on the website to increase public confidence, usage and interaction with the site. For example traffic reports, weather, events and electronic petitions.

What is a Digital Inclusion Strategy?

Over 40% of the UK population does not use online channels. Exclusion from access to digital channels matters for these users, especially as the digitally excluded group includes socially excluded and hard to reach groups who are likely to have the greatest needs from public services.

It also matters for the delivery of efficient public services, because when people cannot access services online they invariably access them via alternative means which are generally more expensive. Again, the priorities set out in the Digital Britain report reinforce the importance of digital inclusion; the report sets out the Government's plans to drive digital participation in the context of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan and the proposed Digital Switchover of Public Services programme. The report also reiterates the Government's commitment to ensuring that public services online are designed for ease of use by the widest range of citizens.

It is therefore important that any channel strategy includes plans for communicating these hard to reach groups.

Embrace digital

The future will be digital because your customers will demand it of you. The sooner you accept that, and start making the moves towards becoming a digital organisation, the easier the process will be for you, your staff and your citizens.

Think digital – not just digital inclusion

If you start the process by thinking about how you are going to become a digital organisation, bringing citizens along with you will be a lot easier. Your digital strategy will have a positive impact across your council helping you work more efficiently and deliver a better service as well as helping your citizens to become more financially, socially and digitally included.

But remember – it's a change programme, not a technology one

It's easy to get consumed with the tools and the technology you'll want to use to support your new digital council, but to be successful your digital strategy needs to be about winning the hearts and minds and staff and citizens.

Share your knowledge

Creating a digital strategy from scratch can be pretty daunting, but you're not the first council to go through it, and there are plenty of councils out there who are happy to share their expertise.

Address the main barriers

We know the main barriers that prevent people from using the internet are motivation, skills and access, so to be successful in supporting your citizens you need to address all three, without overemphasising any of them. It's easy to see broadband for all as the golden ticket, but without the need to go online, or the skills to use the Internet confidently, it's likely citizens will continue to feel excluded.

Know your citizens

It's really important to understand your excluded citizens, and target them carefully. If it's parents of school age children, then supporting them to find school places online or to help their children with learning can be the carrot they need to improve their own skills. Universal credit will be a big stick to encourage tenants to improve their skills, but providing some carrots as well will help makes the journey easier for everyone.

Provide access a key locations

You can provide public Internet access at our key locations, e.g. Libraries, Museums, and Council Offices.

Accessibility of contact strategy

What is an “Accessibility of Contact” Strategy?

In the context of this document, accessibility of contact refers to the ease or difficulty that a citizen may experience whilst using different electronic access channels to obtain services from the authority. For example, someone with hearing difficulties may find the telephone unusable and may prefer to communicate through email. Equally a customer who does not have English as their first language may not be able to access any contact channel without appropriate translation services.

The following list a few ways you achieve accessibility.

1. To provide a range of language and easy to read options where practical on our website and mobile apps. When it is not practical to do so to clearly indicate how a customer can obtain translation services or obtain information in a format suitable for them (e.g. Large text, MP3 etc.)
2. To use inbound text messaging to communicate with hearing impaired customers
3. To provide full mediated access to our website via the council's Contact Centre
4. To provide full mediated access to our website via the council's face to face centres
5. To obtain and maintain the “WCAG 2.0 level AA” rating for accessibility by all to our website
6. Carry out an Equality Impact Assessment of the channel mix and regularly consult with disability advocacy groups and make reasonable adjustments to the channels as needed.

Strategies For Specific Channels

Coming up with different strategies can take a while, and you can only come up with strategies you are aware of. The following sections list strategic key areas you should look to include when defining your strategy.



Telephone strategy

The following lists key strategies you will need to include in your own telephone strategy.

1. Provide one main phone number for the organisation, which can be easily found in order to make contacting the council straightforward.
2. Make a limited number of specialist phone numbers available to your citizens to allow “menu-less” access to our contact centre
3. To answer the phone within 20 seconds
4. To use telephone call data and customer feedback to identify areas of improvement within the council and work to eliminate red tape, process failure and unnecessary cost to the public.
5. To seek opportunities to work with other public sector contact centres to improve overall service, accessibility and improve value for money.
6. To use 0333/0300/0345/020 phone numbers wherever possible to make contacting the authority cheaper on “pay as you go” mobile phones.
7. To constantly improve the number of customer queries that we are able to resolve first time on the telephone.
8. To provide automated phone services where appropriate as an option.
9. To let the caller know how many minutes before we expect to answer the call.
10. To maintain industry accreditation of the council’s contact centre.
11. To maintain overall service excellence as evidenced by customer feedback, industry awards and accreditations
12. To provide a comprehensive translation service to allow easy access to the authority for all.
13. To use telephone call data and customer feedback to identify areas of improvement within the council and work to eliminate red tape, process failure and unnecessary cost to the public
14. Wherever possible, use the public website to transact in our contact centre to ensure that the site is fit for purpose for our residents.
15. For each service you provide over the phone offer alternative channels to receive the same service.

Mobile app strategy

The following lists key strategies you will need to include in your own mobile app strategy.

1. Provide the ability to report issues, apply for items, request services, and pay for services.
2. Provide news, events, jobs, council meetings and key events through the mobile app.
3. Offer the ability to search for near by council facilities.
4. Offer the ability to search for their local councilor.
5. Offer key seasonal items of information.
6. Offer key opening times for leisure facilities and recycling centres.
7. Offer the ability to view on going road works near to the citizen.
8. You should make use of existing content from your website and not double key the information.
9. You should supply key contact information, so if the citizen is not happy using this channel they can use other alternatives.
10. Provide integration from your mobile app to your core CRM systems.
11. Provide the ability to use the app with social media.
12. Provide a login and register facility to enable the citizen to receive updates and track their historic transactions.
13. Allow the citizens to complete ePetitions.
14. Allow the citizens to complete eVoting.
15. Allow the citizens to complete eQuestionnaires.
16. Monitor the registration data, and analyze the demography of the apps user base.
17. Offer different apps for different for different purposes, i.e. youth apps, domestic abuse, crime.
18. Offer location based notifications.
19. Action broadcast messages for email, SMS and push messages.

Mobile telephone strategy

The following lists key strategies you will need to include in your own mobile strategy.

1. To provide access to council telephone based services using only 01,02 and 03 prefixes to ensure the minimum costs to mobile phone users, particularly on “pay as you go” tariffs.
2. To use the emerging mobile phone technology in a tactical manner to provide better access to information for targeted user groups, to reduce costs, increase speed of communication or reduce direct contact”
3. To use outbound text messaging to confirm appointments, chase payments and advise of school closures.
4. To use inbound text messaging to communicate with hearing impaired customers.
5. To monitor opportunities and take up rates of mobile technologies.
6. Performance and usage of this channel will be monitored as services are developed
7. To develop appropriate applications for mobile phones including fault reporting and simple information provision.
8. To use outbound text messages to chase outstanding payments
9. To develop new inbound and outbound text services

Web strategy

The following lists key strategies you will need to include in your own web strategy.

1. To promote the website as the main access point for the council's services for simple information and transactional services.
2. To provide a single website for the organisation to make contacting the council straightforward for everyone.
3. Ensure that business cases for improvements reflect both increased public satisfaction, but also reduced contact centre effort in providing mediated access.
4. To ensure that all web content is written in plain English and is easy to understand
5. To ensure that the website is available and operational 24/7
6. To aim to place 100% of our transactional services online and to encourage customer usage to reduce costs and provide 24/7 access to the authority's services
7. To maintain overall service excellence as evidenced by customer feedback, industry awards and SOCITM usability ratings.
8. To obtain and maintain the "WCAG 2.0 level AA" rating for accessibility by all.
9. Promote the website as the main access point for the council's services for simple information and transactional services
10. To increase the usability of our online systems to make them the channel of choice for simple transactions to promote channel shift
11. Ensure that business cases for improvements reflect both increased public satisfaction, but also reduced contact centre effort in providing mediated access.
12. To provide appropriate intuitive map based interfaces to both transactional and information systems

13. To integrate all online transactions directly into back office systems to prevent double entering of information
14. To provide status updates for any transactions that are started on the web but cannot be completed online – for example reporting a fault
15. To ensure that all council leaflets and literature are made available via the website in order to reduce printing, cost and environmental impact
16. To ensure that all communications activity is replicated on the council's website
17. To promote the use of the council's website through "offline" marketing
18. Use new technologies such as 'Web 2.0' to increase democratic engagement, reach wider audiences and increase transparency.
19. Add engaging content on the website to increase public confidence, usage and interaction with the site. For example traffic reports, weather, events and ePetitions.
20. To invest in technology that allows publishing to and from multiple websites from a single point to ensure any shared data is always up to date.

21. To provide a range of language options where practical and when it is not practical to do so to clearly indicate how a customer can obtain translation services.
22. To provide live web chat facilities as an alternative to the telephone, post and email channels.
23. Establish a roadmap for a single account for residents across Police, NHS, Districts and County Councils.

Face to face strategy

The following lists key strategies you will need to include in your own face-to-face strategy.

1. To undertake process reviews to identify potential channel shift and quality improvements to your face-to-face service.
2. To provide mediated access to the website through face-to-face staff.
3. To seek opportunities to share face to face provision with other organisations.
4. Citizens will be seen at the appointed time or, if we are delayed, will receive an explanation and be kept informed.
5. Citizens will be seen within 15 minutes if they have no appointment, or be offered an alternative time
6. Provide face-to-face staff with the same level and quality of information that the contact centre has access to, using mobile technology.
7. We will provide a clean, tidy and comfortable waiting area and, wherever possible, a space to see us in private, and facilities for young children.

Post or paper communication strategy

The following lists key strategies you will need to include in your own post strategy.

1. To provide a complete range of online forms to minimise the amount of post handled.
2. To place more of our leaflets and information online in order to minimise printing and reduce our environmental impact.
3. To reply to all letters within 5 working days.
4. Monitor demand across all channels for a representative sample of information.
5. Integrate email and postal distribution lists in order to give people the choice to opt for email only.
6. To reduce the amount of post and paper communication by better use of electronic channels.
7. To use second-class post as our main postal tariff to minimise cost.

Email strategy

The following lists key strategies you will need to include in your own email strategy.

1. To develop other channels in the ways detailed in this document to provide more attractive options to the email channel.
2. To provide a complete range of online forms to minimise the amount of emails handled.
3. To aim to place 100% of our transactional services online and to encourage customer usage to reduce costs and provide 24/7 access to the authority's services.
4. To answer all emails within 24 hours
5. Work with partners to ensure inbound emails contain all the information needed, ideally in a format that can be semi-automated.
6. Integrate email and postal distribution lists in order to give people the choice to opt for email only.

New media strategy

The past year has cemented the position of social media as the first channel that many consumers turn to when asking customer service questions or complaining. Councils have recognised this with a doubling of Facebook pages, Twitter presence and hosting of their own online forums compared to 2011.

However there is still a long way to go, few councils have linked customer service pages to social media. This potentially leads to a silo-based approach that replicates effort and content between different channels, leading to an inconsistent, inefficient response. More integration is needed to avoid this.

The following lists key strategies you will need to include in your own new media strategy.

1. Launch electronic petitions
2. Regularly review emerging and maturing new media channels
3. Develop mobile phone provisions, particularly SMS messaging
4. Broadcast Council meetings on the web
5. Launch live web chat sessions with councillors
6. Review the use of Digital TV
7. Review the use of on-line forums
8. Review the use of social networking sites – e.g. Facebook, Twitter
9. Review the use of social media sites – e.g. YouTube
10. Launch on-line photo galleries
11. Create more engaging content that can be placed on the website to increase public confidence, usage and interaction with the site. For example traffic reports, weather, events and ePetitions.
12. Use new technologies such as ‘Web 2.0’ to increase democratic engagement, reach wider audiences and increase the transparency
13. To develop appropriate applications for mobile phones including fault reporting and simple information provision
14. To use outbound text messages to advise of temporary school closures, chase outstanding payments, confirm appointments

15. To use inbound text messaging to communicate with hearing impaired customers
16. To develop new inbound and outbound text services
Customer Service Improvement
17. To provide live web chat facilities as an alternative to the telephone, post and email channels
18. To invest in technology that allows publishing to and from multiple websites and mobile devices from a single point to ensure any shared data is always up to date