



Tennessee redefines the customer experience for government services

Department of Human Services slashes inquiry resolution times by 70% with ServiceNow CSM

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) offers temporary economic assistance, work opportunities, and protective services that improve the lives of Tennesseans. By partnering with other agencies delivering services, the DHS helps citizens in need become self-sufficient and improve their quality of life. Part of the Tennessee State Government, the DHS shares the Governor's priority of providing the best possible service at the lowest possible cost.

However, the DHS found itself struggling with service delivery. Wait times at its customer service center peaked due to a large-scale voluntary employee buyout, a hiring freeze, and a dramatic increase in customer volumes. According to Landon Cook, director of customer service operations at the DHS, "We experienced a perfect storm. Call center wait times shot up to more than two hours at peak periods, and email responses took several days on average. At the same time, we saw call center complaints increase 275%, and our annual escalated calls nearly doubled from 8,800 to 16,600. To deliver the level of service that our citizens deserve, we had to modernize our approach to customer service."

From slow manual processes and siloed channels...

At the time, the DHS customer service center still relied on antiquated manual processes to handle customer interactions. Inquiries were created, logged and managed using a combination of emails, spreadsheets, and printouts. While the department did have an inquiry management system, only a handful of DHS employees had access, and the system was extremely confusing and hard to use.

Cook says, "We didn't have a platform where we could share information from call to call, let alone across multiple channels. Our inquiry management system was just a data warehouse – inquiries went in, but we couldn't easily get information out. Because we relied on manual processes, our performance wasn't good. It took 36 hours just to assign an inquiry to the right agent, and it took an additional 84 hours to resolve it. That's 120 hours in total. It just wasn't acceptable. When citizens come to us, they need help, and a negative customer experience only makes a scary personal situation even worse."



Location

Tennessee

Industry

Government

Mission

Offer temporary economic assistance, work opportunities, and protective services to improve the lives of Tennesseans

Scope

133 Offices

95 Counties

18 Programs and Services

Employees

~4,400

Customer Base

~2 million Tennesseans

... to a seamless and responsive omnichannel customer experience

The DHS needed a new customer service solution that empowered its team to serve Tennessee's citizens. The department looked for a platform that would help it create a seamless customer experience, simplify and accelerate service delivery, unify workflows and share information, and deliver the insights its leadership needed to make data-driven decisions about customer service.

It chose ServiceNow Customer Service Management. Cook explains, "We looked at other products, but we had major concerns about security, expandability, and cost. On the other hand, ServiceNow ticked all the boxes. And, because our state IT department, Strategic Technology Solutions, already used ServiceNow and was very satisfied with it, that meant that we were part of a state-wide platform."

Slashing inquiry resolution times from 120 hours to 34 hours

Partnering with Strategic Technology Solutions, the DHS went live with a pilot ServiceNow Customer Service Management solution in just two months. Three months after that, the DHS launched ServiceNow Customer Service Management across the entire state, creating a user-friendly, consistent, and responsive customer experience for Tennesseans.

Cook says, "We immediately saw dramatic improvements in quality and efficiency. Instead of taking 36 hours to assign an inquiry to an agent, it now takes less than two minutes. And, the average time to resolve a high-level inquiry – including assignment – has fallen from 120 hours to 34 hours. In total, we've reduced our end-to-end resolution times by more than 70%. In fact, we cut our monthly untimely queries from 130 to just 20 within a month of launch. And, of course, that efficiency also translates directly into lower costs for our taxpayers."

A single view of customers

Cook continues, "We're giving our customers the experience they deserve – and it's not just about response times. Our services are now accessible by phone, email, live chat, lobby kiosks, and mobile. We deliver a consistent experience across all our channels, and we now have a single view of our customers that's broken down silos across our program areas, increasing collaboration and dramatically reducing duplicate inquiries. And, we now have the data and reports we need to continuously improve the services we deliver."

Success breeds success

Cook also stresses the impact on team morale. "Before, we were struggling with negative perceptions, both internally and from our customers. Put simply, customer service staff were seen as the 'bad guys,' and that created low morale. Now, morale is at an all-time high as our success is recognized. We've even won an internal award from the State of Tennessee."

News of that success is spreading beyond the DHS. The Tennessee Department of General Services, Department of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities, and Department of Veteran Affairs are all looking to deploy ServiceNow Customer Service Management as part of a statewide rollout. According to Cook, "In addition to dramatically enhancing service delivery, this statewide rollout will also provide a unified customer and service view across departments – truly delivering on the Governor's vision of 'no wrong door' in a transparent Tennessee."



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