How Can Justice Agencies Better Meet Citizens' Expectations?
For any public service organization, citizen opinions matter. In particular, for justice agencies, those views are not only vital in terms of citizens’ overall cooperation with how the system works, but also act as a driver for changing practices. With the accent on swift and sure justice, the time is right to consider how a new wave of digital technologies can help influence the justice system and, ultimately, improve citizens’ experiences.

In 2014, Accenture commissioned a survey among 3,500 citizens in seven countries across the world. We wanted to explore citizens’ perceptions about their current and future use of digital technologies, such as video conferencing and online portals, when dealing with justice agencies. The survey findings revealed that citizens are not only willing to interact with their justice agency using digital technologies, but also are positive about the potential benefits from doing so.

Justice agencies should feel encouraged by the public support for embracing digital practices; in this way, agencies can better manage administrative processes, reduce costs and satisfy citizen expectations. What justice agencies may need to consider, however, is the extent to which citizens’ expectations may not match the reality of how the justice system currently operates—and the steps that need to be taken to close the gap.
Fragmented services, multiple agencies and entrenched behaviors mean that the process of realizing justice is often too slow—reducing the cause and effect of enforcing punishment and diluting the impact on offender behaviors. Whether managing a simple civil case or handling complex global criminality, justice agencies are required to adapt and flex to meet the demands of citizens and other government departments. While there is no “quick fix,” digital technologies can speed up justice processes to benefit citizens.

Our survey aimed to explore some of the fundamental questions that face justice agencies today, namely:

- Are citizens prepared to use digital technologies as part of the justice system?
- Do citizens perceive that digital technologies can improve the justice system?
- What are citizens’ experiences of digital technologies as part of the justice system today and what might they expect in the future?

The findings identified some unexpected differences between public perception and existing justice practices. As such, the survey results offer insights into the use of digital technologies and how justice agencies might integrate digital technologies in the longer term.

About the Survey

In May 2014, an online quantitative poll was conducted among 3,500 respondents (global margin of error ±1.66 percentage points), across seven countries, with approximately 500 respondents each from the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Germany, Spain and Australia (margin of error ±4.38 at the country level). The survey age categories represented include 29 percent between 18 years and 34 years of age, 71 percent were 35 years or older. Fifty-one percent of respondents were female and 49 percent were male. The survey was conducted by marketing research company, Penn Schoen Berland.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2014, Accenture commissioned a survey among 3,500 citizens in seven countries across the world to assess their views around the use of digital technology and its impact on their experiences with the justice system. We found:

Citizens said digital can enhance their interactions with the justice system

Despite having limited experience of digital technologies in the justice system, more than two in three citizens said they see opportunity for digital technology to open up improvements. The majority of citizens also believe digital technologies can boost engagement with the justice system; 82 percent of citizens said they would interact with their justice agency using digital technologies either instead of or in addition to traditional means. In particular, citizens see digital tools such as video conferencing (67 percent), e-mail (62 percent), and online citizen service portals (59 percent) as a likely means for them to interact digitally with the justice system.

A gap exists between citizens’ experiences of digital technologies and their expectations

Although the majority of those citizens who have interacted with the justice system previously are generally satisfied, there is room for improvement. Citizens noted that their country’s justice agency could improve when it comes to speed and efficiency of the system (74 percent), helpfulness of communications and resources (61 percent) and cost (52 percent). Indeed, the gap between citizen expectations of the service they enjoy and the reality is considerable. Despite their willingness to embrace digital, the vast majority (87 percent) of those respondents who have interacted with the justice system to date, said they have not experienced any technological benefits.

Citizens see room for improvement for digital justice compared with other government interactions

Citizens expressed a desire for increased access to public services and are more inclined to use digital channels to conduct routine government business and manage their interactions with government agencies. Nearly three in four (72%) citizens said technology has improved their interaction with at least one government agency. However, justice lags behind six other government agencies when the survey asked if technology had improved that interaction. Despite these limitations, the majority of citizens believe that digital technology can benefit the justice system in at least one area, especially speed (63 percent) and cost (62 percent)—including reducing the personal cost for the individuals involved (54 percent).
Citizens favor digital interaction

82% would interact with justice using digital either instead of or in addition to traditional means

Citizens say the justice system needs to improve

74% Speed and efficiency
52% Cost
61% Communications and resources

Citizens recognize the role of technology

72% Technology has improved interaction with at least one government agency
COUNTRY COMPARISONS

United Kingdom
The United Kingdom has the highest service satisfaction rate across all geographies studied. Seventy-five percent who have interacted with their justice agency were satisfied with the service they received. Of those willing to interact with the justice system via digital technology, e-mail is the preferred method for interacting (75 percent).

France
In France nearly eight out of 10 (79 percent) said digital technology can help the speed and efficiency of the justice system. Also, 69 percent of citizens said that digital technology has the potential to speed up outcomes.

Germany
In Germany, citizens who are willing to interact with the justice system via digital technology are most receptive to e-mail (71 percent) across case types and activities. Although 69 percent said speed and efficiency is an area that could be improved.

Italy
In Italy more than nine in 10 citizens are confident that digital technology can help the justice system. In addition, more Italians say they would interact with their justice system via digital technology than any other country (56 percent).

Spain
Citizens in Spain that are prepared to use digital technology with the justice system are more willing to interact using video conferencing (78 percent), higher than any other geography. Many Spaniards are confident that digital technology can help: 68 percent of citizens say it has the potential to speed up outcomes.

United States
In the United States, more than half (56 percent) of respondents have personal experience of interacting with a justice agency, the highest percentage of all geographies studied. In addition, 56 percent say that digital technology can reduce the public cost of the justice system.

Australia
Citizens in Australia are especially receptive to the potential of digital technology to improve the convenience of the justice system (57 percent) when compared to most other countries. Current satisfaction among those who have personally interacted with the justice system in Australia is high at 74 percent.
THREE WAYS TO DEVELOP DIGITAL JUSTICE

The 2014 research offers insights into how justice agencies around the world can develop their digital capabilities. In the light of these findings and Accenture experience, we believe justice agencies need to consider the following three key takeaways:

**Become swift as well as sure**

Historical practices and processes need to be re-evaluated—from the way courts are managed and run to investing in rehabilitation and recidivism programs that keep repeat offenders out of the criminal justice system. Digital technologies such as video-enabled justice systems—that speed up court scheduling and management—can improve time-consuming court processes. Fast resolution of crime helps citizens gain confidence in the justice system, encouraging them to come forward as witnesses in the future.

**Drive out cost**

The justice system is under pressure to eliminate waste and, like the private sector, could continuously review, streamline or eliminate processes to drive down cost. The most successful companies make transformational change an inherent part of their mission, maximizing digital means to enable that change. By using digital technologies to deliver a fast, flexible service that enables staff to gain a broader set of skills and capabilities, crime can be fought far more dynamically and proactively to help improve the results of the agencies involved, and begin to meet—and exceed—citizens’ expectations.

**Share and collaborate**

Addressing justice reform is not a standalone activity as it affects a chain of departments and public service organizations. Collaboration is necessary to deliver effective public safety structures in the modern age. Without connectivity and shared data, not only is the potential for joined up justice hampered, but also the ability of agencies to predict prison accommodation requirements, or properly assess the trends that lead to a better deployment of resources, is undermined.
For more information about the Accenture online citizen survey, or to learn more about justice transformation, please contact:

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About Delivering Public Service for the Future

What does it take to deliver public service for the future? Public service leaders must embrace four structural shifts—advancing toward personalized services, insight-driven operations, a public entrepreneurship mindset and a cross-agency commitment to mission productivity. By making these shifts, leaders can support flourishing societies, safe, secure nations and economic vitality for citizens in a digital world—delivering public service for the future.

About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with approximately 319,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world’s most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US$30.0 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2014. Its home page is www.accenture.com.