



SERVING THE DIGITAL CITIZEN

Key Takeaways from the
2016 Digital Citizen Summit

Putting users at the center of public service design. Bridging a generation gap between customers and employees. Finding creative solutions—on the other side of conflict. When designing digital services, government agencies face these kinds of challenges and opportunities. They also face fast-rising citizen expectations. In fact, a 2016 Accenture Public Service Pulse Survey found that 85 percent of Americans expect the same or higher quality from government digital services as from commercial organizations. How to meet these demands was the focus of the Digital Citizen Summit hosted by Government Executive and Accenture. Here, we share some key takeaways from the event.

Think “Outside In”

The traditional “Inside Out” approach to designing services focuses first on developing technical and functional requirements. Digital services require an “Outside In” approach with user experience at the forefront. Understanding consumers’ stated and unstated needs is the first step, with those needs identified through testing and empirical data. Combined with an Agile development culture, the “Outside In” approach can yield better services—more quickly and economically.

“‘Outside In’ represents a cultural change. It means challenging assumptions and requires people to break out of learned behaviors,” said Michael Lawless, managing director for Accenture Federal Services. “You can never assume you already know what the customer wants.”

“It’s when you push just outside of your comfort zone that breakthrough moments occur.”

Michael Lawless
Managing Director,
Accenture Federal Services

Map all stakeholders

Uber has shown the value of fundamentally rethinking longstanding service models. At the summit, Tom Hayes, general manager of Uber for Washington D.C., Virginia and Maryland, shared one of the factors that has powered Uber’s success: a clear understanding of its “customers.” Riders, of course, are critical, but responding to the needs of Uber drivers is as, or perhaps more, important to achieving continued success. In developing new public services, government agencies have opportunities to understand the full range of constituencies they serve. Like Uber riders, citizens clearly matter—but so do the needs of employees, partners and affiliated associations.

The Department of Education’s FSA division is already tackling the needs of diverse stakeholders. During the event, Senior Adviser Jessica Barrett Simpson shared how the department has made the student loan process more customer-centric. Much of the work focused on making the Studentloans.gov site easier to navigate—and redesigning it for a mobile-first generation of citizens.

As she explained, the typical customer is 18 to 24 years old, while the average employee is much older: “This generation gap is a reason why it’s very important for us to validate with data what our customer wants, and how to deliver it,” Simpson noted. “Beware falling into believing you already know what’s best, and use web analytics to consistently identify customer pain points.”

Creative breakthroughs

Commercial entities have provided compelling examples of innovation fueled by creativity and analytics. To help government organizations tap into such potential, Accenture established its first Digital Studio exclusively dedicated to federal clients. Managing Director Chris Zinner told Government Executive about one of the important features of the studio: the rumble room.

“I love the term ‘rumble’ because it connotes a certain level of tension,” Zinner said. “We believe that innovation sits just on the other side of conflict. The rumble is a two-day event that brings together a diverse group with different perspectives across the organization who get challenged by design thinking activities—all done in a safe space for constructive criticism and iterative improvements.”

The summit showcased pockets of innovation that are revealing the potential of digital governance. By continuing to nurture and expand innovation, government is building a strong and flexible foundation for serving even the most demanding of digital citizens.



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