



SQUIZ

Serve and support

How to create digital services that support the citizen experience



Squiz Digital Experience Platform

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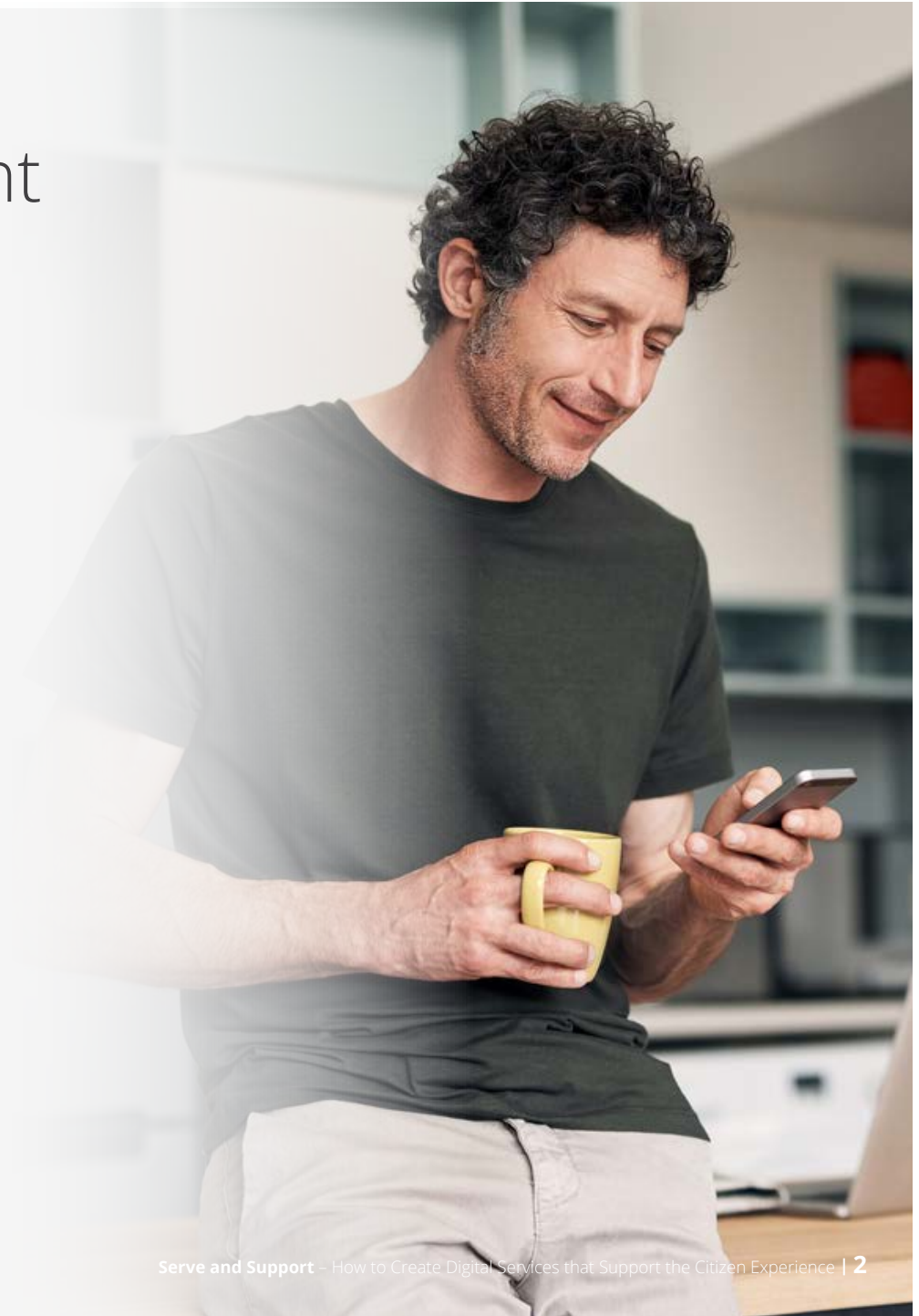
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The state of local government

Few could have predicted, at the end of 2019, how 2020 would pan out. Aside from the obviously devastating effects of COVID-19, pandemic containment measures, enforced to varying degrees from one country to the next, had a huge impact on the global economy – the full extent of which we're yet to see.

For many local government organizations, already struggling to deliver improved digital services against a backdrop of increased citizen expectations and funding challenges, the pandemic quickly exposed service shortcomings at a critical time. While the immediate shockwaves tested government IT infrastructures – for example, the MyGov app outage that left thousands of Australian citizens without access to key government services during the height of the pandemic¹ – the longer-term implications for digital citizen services will be far more complex.

1. 'MyGov's ill-timed meltdown', The Conversation, March 2020



In 2019, while 67% of government organizations reported that they were pursuing digital transformation, only 5% claimed to be achieving it.² Where local governments and councils previously lagged behind, 2020 introduced an entirely new imperative for prioritizing the digital citizen experience.

In a post-COVID world – where the vulnerable can't risk in-person transactions, those facing economic hardship need immediate assistance and an uncertain future places even greater importance on 24/7 access to vital information – citizens will increasingly depend upon local government organizations to provide fast, reliable and supportive digital services.

67%

of government organizations reported that they were pursuing digital transformation in 2019



only 5%

claimed to be achieving it.

2. Government CIOs Must Resist Transformation Hype and Focus on Digital Optimization, Gartner, December 2019

Challenges for local governments

While most local government organizations would agree that they exist to serve, support and inform citizens, doing so has become increasingly difficult, due to a number of challenges:



Socio-economic demographics



Lack of funding



Legacy IT systems



Skills shortages



Engaging citizens



Socio-economic demographics

Citizens and their needs have changed dramatically – and will continue to do so. Not only is the global population rapidly growing (set to increase by 2 billion in the next 30 years ¹), it's also rapidly aging, with over-65 year olds set to make up 16% of the population by 2050 ².

Rapid urbanization, mass migration and a sharp increase in unemployment (with an estimated 400 million full-time jobs lost within the first 6 months of 2020 ³), means that local government organizations are serving a generation of citizens whose needs are constantly changing.



Lack of funding

Financing better public services has always been a problem for local government, with a seemingly constant pressure to do more with fewer or stretched resources. In the UK, local government spending on services has fallen by 21% since 2010 ⁴; while, in the US, state and local government revenue fell by 9% in 2009 and still hasn't recovered, leading to on-going cuts ⁵. In Australia, the NSW government proposed more than a hundred forced council amalgamations, in 2015, with a view to saving \$2 billion a year ⁶.

1. World Population Prospects, United Nations, 2019
2. World Population Aging Report, United Nations, 2019
3. COVID-19 and The World of Work, International Labour Organisation, June 2020
4. Council Funding: What's Happened and What's Next?, Institute for Fiscal Studies, May 2019
5. How Will the Coronavirus Affect State and Local Government Budgets?, The Brookings Institution, March 2020
6. Assessment of Council Fit for the Future Proposals, Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, October 2015



Legacy IT systems

Despite more than 1,000 exciting new digital technologies emerging every year,¹ many local government organizations are lumbered with outdated, unsupported legacy IT systems that struggle to deliver the digital services and experiences that modern citizens expect. In fact, a global Gartner survey of government CIOs found that up to 13% of public sector technology budgets are allocated towards legacy modernization.²



Skills shortages

Attracting candidates with the right digital skillset to deliver digital transformation programs has been a challenge for many local governments; in fact, 16% of government CIOs listed 'skills' as one of their top three barriers to success, when trying to deliver digital initiatives.²

Considering that the average digital service reinvention can involve between 30 to 50 employees, many local governments are struggling to fill the necessary roles to deliver better services.⁴

1. Marketing Technology Landscape Supergraphic (2020), Chiefmartec, April 2020
2. Legacy IT – The Biggest Barrier to Transformation?, GovTech Leaders, April 2018
3. 2017 CIO Agenda: A Government Perspective, Gartner, April 2017
4. Digital Public Services: How to Achieve Fast Transformation at Scale, McKinsey, July 2020



Engaging citizens

With such a diverse and constantly changing citizen demographic, creating services and experiences that meet the needs of every citizen within their jurisdiction can seem like an impossible task for local governments. While big consumer brands are investing significant budgets into optimizing experiences for just a handful of customer journeys, local governments are expected to deliver a similar standard, for a multitude of different journeys on limited budgets. In a recent report, McKinsey cite an example from the German government: 5,900 transactions were grouped into 575 distinct services from a user perspective, which, in turn, contribute to 55 user journeys.¹

1. McKinsey, 2020



Private-sector organizations typically manage just a few customer journeys. Governments, by contrast, are responsible for 50 to 100 journeys, which account for thousands of individual services

Digital Public Services, McKinsey, 2020

Challenges for citizens

The same socio-economic factors that make modern citizens a 'moving target' for local governments trying to meet their needs, are also directly impacting what citizens need and expect from government services.



Trust in uncertain times



Digital natives



Greater citizen support



Non-digital natives



More and more often, people see no reason why public services should be more complicated than shopping online.

***Digital Public Services,
McKinsey, 2020***



Trust in uncertain times

COVID-19, increased unemployment and an impending global recession all mean that today's citizens need more reassurance from their governments than ever before. While local government is often more trusted than central government agencies, perceived failures in ethics and competence can reduce trust, underlining the importance of good customer experience through all channels.



Greater citizen support

An aging population, mass migration and uncertain economic future are just some of the challenges that mean citizens will need greater access to government services. For example, when the Jobkeeper and Jobseeker schemes were announced by the Australian government, soon after lockdown measures were enforced, the Centrelink app, website and offices were bombarded with requests and, within a few months, 3.5 million citizens were claiming via the schemes.¹ As more and more citizens come to depend on local government services for vital support, governments will need to be able to pivot and scale their services to meet demand.

1. The Key Facts and Figures from The Jobkeeper and Jobseeker Coronavirus Support Changes, ABC, July 2020



Digital natives

At a time when it's possible to manage almost every other day-to-day task online, with minimal effort – from banking and shopping to running a business – citizens are increasingly frustrated by councils and local government organizations that are stuck in the past, requiring processes to be carried out in-person, by post or by phone. The good news is that citizens – both young and old – have an 'adopter' mindset, with 40% of citizens regularly using government digital services.¹

1. Realizing the Promise of Government-as-a-Platform, Atos, 2020
2. Exploring the UK's Digital Divide, Office for National Statistics, March 2019
3. Rising to the Citizen Experience Challenge, Government News, July 2019

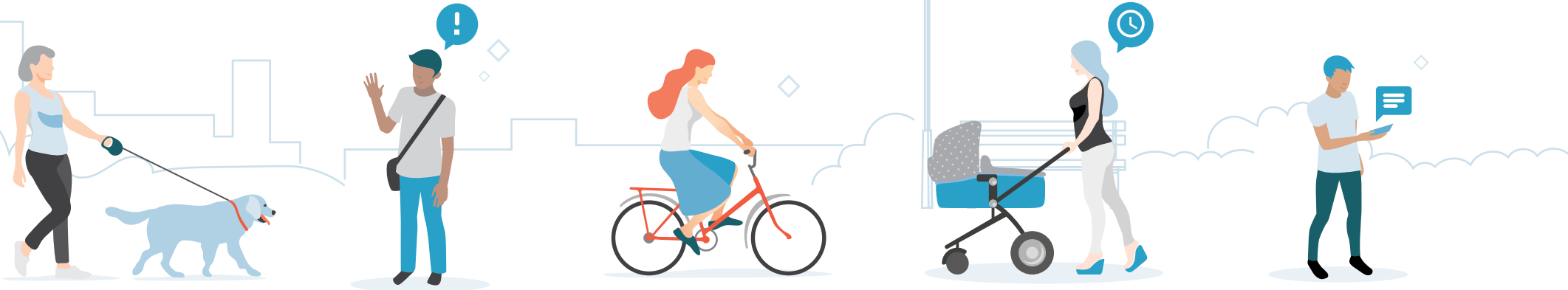


Non-digital natives

While those that are digitally savvy are keen to try new digital services, there is still a significant proportion of citizens that are either unwilling or unable to use digital channels. In fact, in 2018, 10% of the UK adult population were classed as 'internet non-users' (people who have either never used the internet or have not used it in the last three months).² There is also a middle-group of citizens that are willing to use digital services but have accessibility challenges or are less experienced users, with many 'seeking a clean user experience with immediate, simplified access to services'.³

Local government organizations will need to mix and match their services in future; providing excellent digital services for younger, more digitally savvy citizens, while simultaneously ensuring that offline touchpoints continue to fulfill the needs of aging generations.

Modern citizens are:



Getting older...

16%

of the global population will be aged over 65 by 2050.

Distrustful...

57%

don't believe that governments serve everyone equally.

Open-minded...

40%

already regularly use government digital services.

Impatient...

8 seconds

is the current human attention span.¹

Digital natives...

76%

own smartphones (across 18 'advanced economies').²

1. Accelerating Dynamics of Collective Attention, Nature Research Journal, April 2019

2. Smartphone Ownership Is Growing Rapidly Around the World, but Not Always Equally, Pew Research, February 2019

The role of digital services

An increasingly complex, demanding and growing customer base, combined with limited budgets, resources and outdated technology, has pushed many local government organizations too far behind the curve to keep up, facing huge service bottlenecks. This is where digital services can transform citizen satisfaction levels and departmental processes, almost overnight.



Long call queues and fragmented customer engagement lead to frustrated residents, reputational damage, and ultimately a failure to deliver efficiency and value for money.

Matthew Chadd, Content Guru



Defining digital services

A digital service (not to be confused with a digital experience) is an online transaction – offering something useful or valuable – that should be so fast, easy and intuitive that it should be almost invisible. The ideal journey is one that enables customers to complete the tasks they've set out to achieve quickly and easily, contributing positively to the customer's overall experience of the organization. Generally, digital services can be split into two categories: informational and transactional. While information services can include websites, virtual assistants, publications and e-learning resources, transactional services focus on completing tasks, such as submitting a claim, making a payment or booking an appointment.

The ability to make use of AI and automation technologies to streamline processes and provide almost instant services, at the click of a button, has enormous implications for local governments – which is why digital services have quickly become a top priority for governments all over the world:

Denmark	92% of Danes use the 'Digital Post' messaging service to communicate with the government.
Estonia	Already offers most of its public services online; data is exchanged seamlessly to deliver continuity between services.
Singapore	Developed its 'Moments of Life' app, where citizens can access most services online.
Germany	Plans to make all public services available online by 2022.
Dubai, UAE	All public services will be paperless and available via a mobile app by 2021.
Australia	Has already digitized many services, with plans to become one of the top 3 digital governments in the world by 2025.

(Source: McKinsey, 2020)

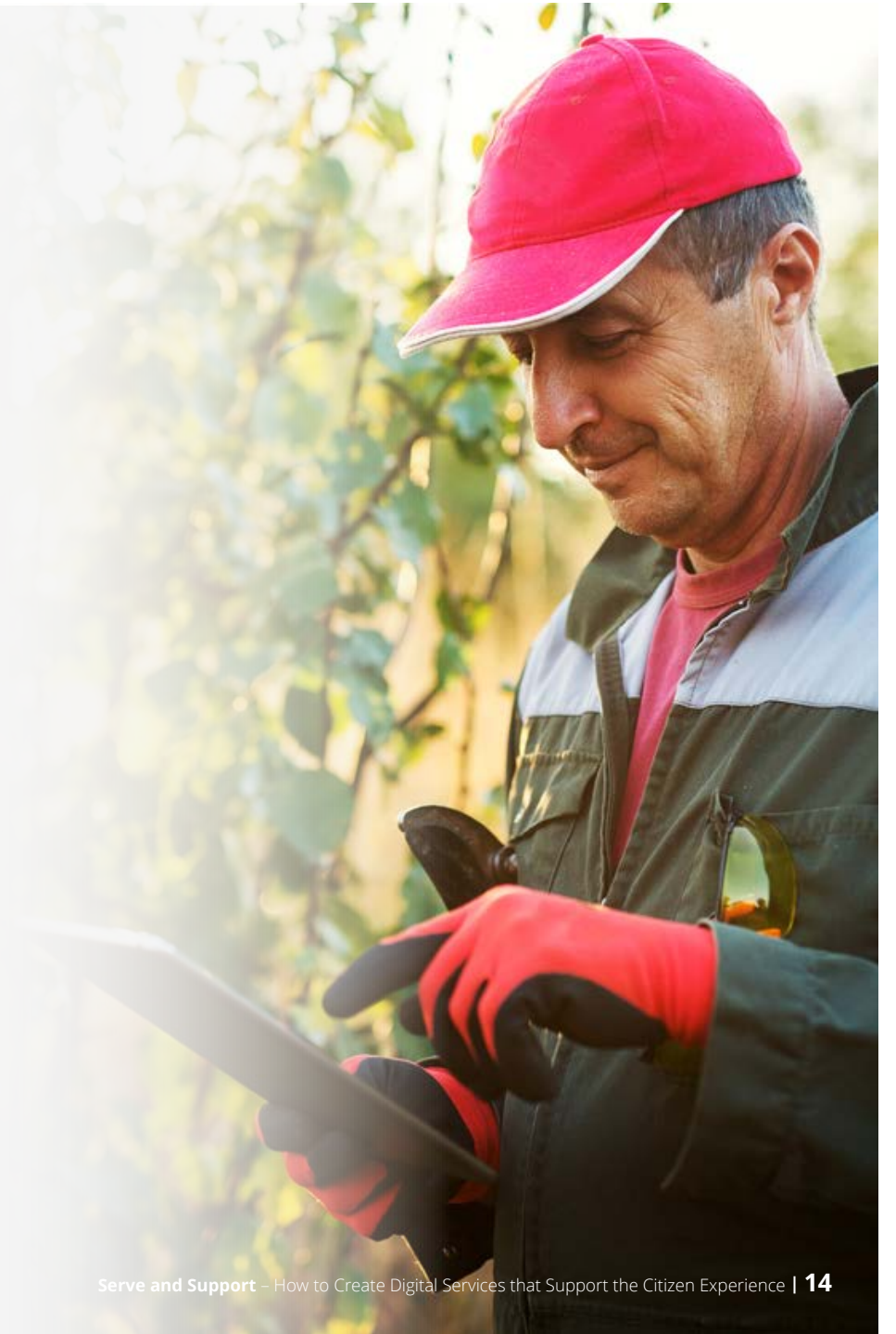
Opportunities for local governments

Not only can digital services tackle all of the key challenges previously outlined but, once up and running, can often provide the crucial proof of concept needed to win support for future funding and digital initiatives.

From offering an instant, personalized service at scale, to freeing up internal staff time to significant cost-savings, digital services offer local governments the best possible method of service delivery. Here are just a few examples of transformative local government digital services:

North Lanarkshire Council

North Lanarkshire Council is the fourth largest local authority in Scotland. The council set out to significantly reduce pressure on its contact center, which received more than 16.5 million calls each year, through the creation of a new citizen portal, enabling citizens to complete transactions and find essential council information online. Within 12 months of launch, 30% of calls to the council were moved to digital, providing a full ROI on the council's IT investment.



Timaru District Council

Timaru District is a local government district in New Zealand's South Island administered by the Timaru District Council. Recognizing that many customers prefer being able to self-serve and avoid the need to queue whether on a call or at a counter, the Council developed a chatbot called 'Tim' to answer a range of customer queries 24/7. Developed in four weeks, using the council's existing web management platform Squiz Matrix CMS and Google's Dialogflow AI service, 'Tim' has handled more than 21,000 enquiries and 77% of respondents answered 'yes' when asked 'Was this response helpful?'.

Austrroads

The Austrroads Safety Barrier Assessment Panel (ASBAP) assesses the crashworthiness and suitability of road safety barriers, systems and devices. To improve the transparency of the ASBAP submission and review cycle, a number of process reforms were planned – one of which was the creation of a new automated online submission process. The new ASBAP Digital Submission Portal was built using Squiz Matrix CMS and offers customers a significantly easier and faster application process.



Office closures, social distancing rules, and health and safety concerns are forcing governments to abandon many deep-rooted orthodoxies about service delivery.

***Transforming Government Post COVID-19,
Deloitte, July 2020***

Opportunities for citizens

Based on their experiences with big brands and retailers, many citizens are very aware of just how good a digital service can be.

It's an accepted fact that the fast, reliable and personalized experiences offered by the private sector lead to increased customer loyalty and satisfaction – in fact, customer-centric companies are 60% more profitable than companies that don't focus on customers.¹ But the same theory can also be applied to the public sector and its citizens.

While many citizens are appreciative of the good work their local authorities deliver, long wait times, unnecessary red tape and an impersonal service lead to dissatisfied citizens... and, as a recent McKinsey survey revealed, the difference between a satisfied and dissatisfied citizen has a direct impact on local governments:

- ▶ Citizens are nine times more likely to trust a government agency if they are satisfied with its service.

- ▶ Satisfied citizens are five times more likely to agree that a public service is a good investment of taxpayers' money.
- ▶ Dissatisfied citizens are twice as likely to contact agency hotlines three or more times for help.
- ▶ Dissatisfied customers are twice as likely to publicly express their unhappiness through social media, letters, hotlines, or calls to local politicians.²



By collecting and analyzing [municipal] data, publishing and integrating it with digital public service applications, local government organizations can improve citizens' quality of life and make their area a better place to live and work.

Computer Business Review, July 2019

1. Wealth Management Digitalization, Deloitte, Aug 2017

2. The Global Case for Customer Experience in Government, McKinsey, September 2019

Setting up for success

For local government organizations looking to begin a digital transformation program and launch a digital service, taking stock of your organization's current circumstances is a vital first step. In an environment where funding for public sector IT initiatives is under greater scrutiny than ever, identifying your organization's strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities – and then considering these as part of your digital strategy – will help to avoid failure.



SWAT analysis

Your strengths

Digital people within the organization
Mandate to automate as much as possible
Customers won't/can't leave
Lots of data
Knowledgeable, passionate employees
Little/no threat from the market

Your Opportunities

The use of various mobile technologies as a contact method
Use of data to identify problems
Digitize process and make them more efficient as a result
Create a culture of innovation within the organization
Alignment of KPIs with the organization's objectives
Collaboration between people and departments
Expanding all sources of revenues
Improve customer service to internal customers and citizens
Increasingly diverse constituencies
Encouraging the development of a sense of ownership in local decision-making and service delivery

No single view of customer
Work in silos
Digital duties are bolted on and not considered integral to roles
Most services work independently and don't talk to each other
Organization does not effectively foster innovation
Use of data
Internal systems not all fit for purpose
Processes are too manual
Organization is full of silos
Hierarchical structure
Customers are reliant on Council staff

Your Weaknesses

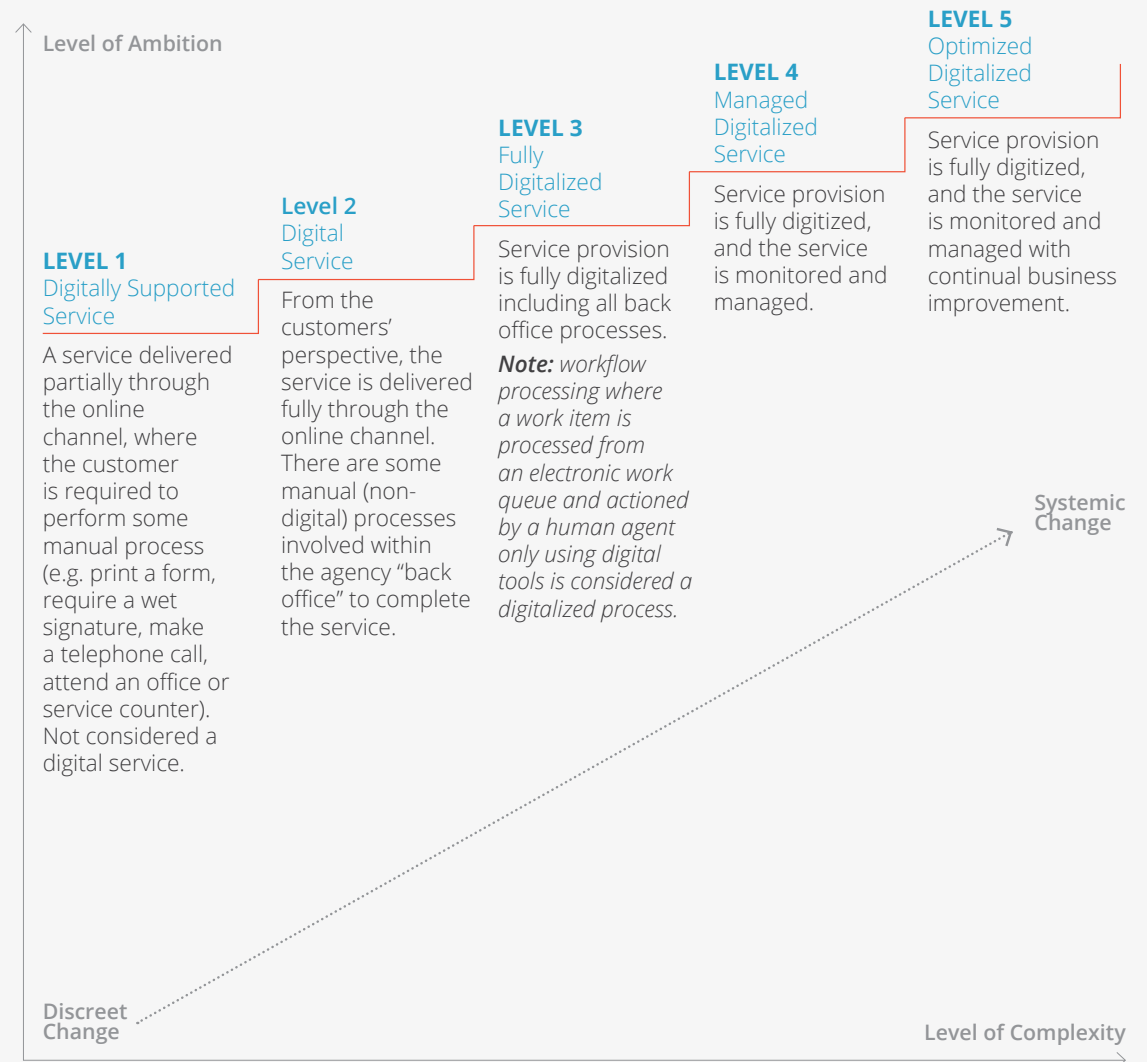
No imperative for change (lack of competition)
Budget cuts – 'do more with less' mandate from the government
Customers becoming increasingly 'digital native'
Aging population
Customers' mood towards austerity is hardening

Your Threats

Digital service maturity model

Once you've identified the gaps within your current organization, as well as the areas where you're already making progress, it's important to apply a similar analysis to your current digital position. Regardless of location or industry, the path to achieving digital services that meet citizen expectations (also known as digital service maturity), requires the right digital vision, skills and technology.

Below is an example of a digital service maturity model, showing the five key levels of moving from a rudimentary online service offering through to a sophisticated, fully digitized and optimized service. The goal for any service-based organization should be level five, but being able to identify where your current services offerings sit will help your organization to recognize current digital strengths and weaknesses – as well as changes necessary for reaching the higher levels of maturity:



Selecting the right technology

A deeper understanding of both your organizational and digital capabilities and requirements will help to inform your technology purchasing decisions... which is vital because choosing the right technology will make or break the success of your digital transformation.

Furthermore, the right technology will also play a critical role in the ability to prove, once up and running, that your digital service is a success; while anecdotal citizen feedback is hugely valuable, data and metrics from your own systems reporting will be able to measure KPIs such as volume of users, successful completion/ transaction rates and more.

Key recommendations

Assess new technologies:

To avoid creating a plethora of siloed and disconnected platforms, the council should assess new technologies with an understanding of how the platform supports the broader council digital / transformation strategy.

Avoid 'closed' vendors:

The key to making technology decisions that can adapt and evolve with the needs of the organization is to find flexible vendors (and platforms). Avoid 'closed' platforms (those that cannot easily integrate with new and external systems) and vendors opposed to shared services.

Involve the digital and communications teams:

Too often the digital and comms teams sit in isolation to the rest of the business, viewed as a separate business function rather than a division which enables the wider Council to function more effectively. The irony is that the comms and digital teams often control the most important technology and channels in the organization – and there can be no digital transformation without an effective website and online services.

Vendor prospecting – treat it like a marriage!

Your relationship with a software vendor is akin to a marriage and should follow a somewhat similar progression; one tends to date first, live together a while, and finally propose marriage. Understand the weight of the decision your organization is about to make and undertake adequate due diligence – ask vendors awkward questions, demand software trials and meet their teams.

Evaluate options against alternatives:

Request software demonstrations early in the process. Have a play and break things, and request a one month trial to enable your team to undertake all the common tasks you will need to do on a day to day basis – then carefully note everything you can't do.



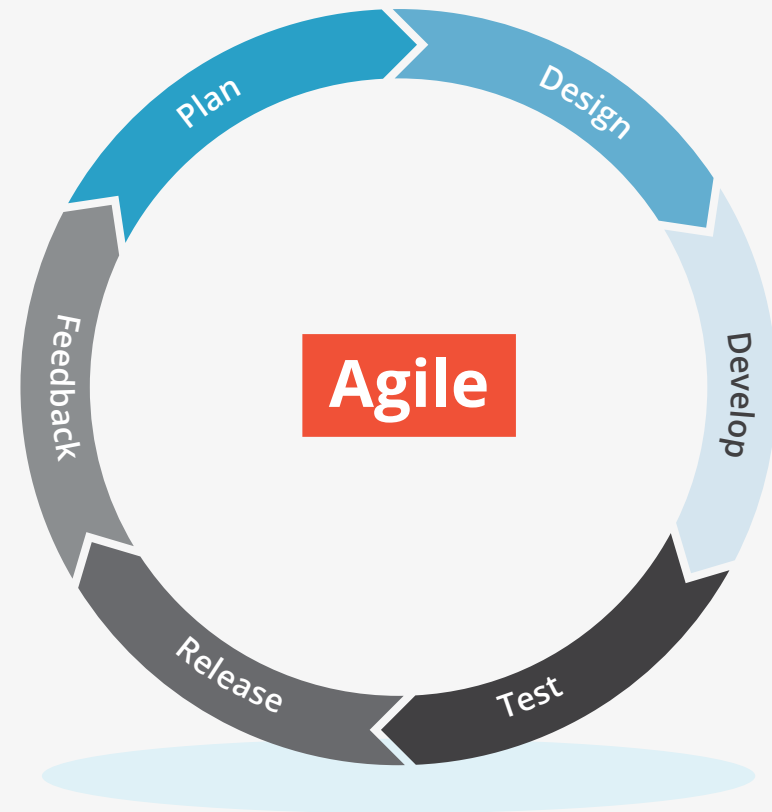
The performance of existing organizational technology can act as a brake on discussions around new technology. Until existing technology works smoothly, stakeholders can be cynical - unwilling to explore future developments and innovative ways of accelerating delivery of services.

Computer Business Review, July 2019

Agile Process

A problem that many local government organizations face, when launching digital initiatives, is that their internal structures and operating models are mired in red tape and cumbersome approval processes that are often at odds with fostering digital innovation. The solution? Agile.

Today, more than 79% of organizations across the globe employ Agile in their project management processes and, with good reason.¹ Agile – which is both a mindset and set of practices that can be applied across software development and project management – focuses on breaking projects down into small, bite-sized tasks. For the same reason that small start-ups can pivot and react to customer needs overnight, while large incumbent enterprises are often too held back by committee decisions, agile enables teams to make progress quickly (and cheaply), then refine and perfect later.



1. The Future of Work, Project Management Institute, 2019

Making agile work in local government

When Elizabeth Walter, program director for Digital Procurement Transformation, and her team were faced with a forced amalgamation of their department, they were set the challenge of launching a new government procurement gateway, buy.nsw, in just 8 weeks.

“When we first had a project cost assessment, reports suggested it would come in at around \$100 million”, revealed Walter. “That’s simply too much to ask for, so instead we broke it down into manageable, smaller work sprints”.

By using an agile methodology, Walter and her team, working closely with digital experience platform (DXP) provider, Squiz, were able to prioritize citizen pain points and stay focused on what needed to be solved now, rather than over-engineering each phase and presenting ministers with expensive business cases.



Agile is a hands-on, innovative and inherently focused on CX. By delivering work quickly, we had great momentum and an immediate feedback loop, so I could explain, and more importantly, show what we were achieving and how funding would be solving problems.

Elizabeth Walter, Program Director for Digital Procurement Transformation, Department of Customer Service NSW

Creating services that serve

For local government digital services to succeed, they must meet citizen needs and expectations, while also being scalable and sustainable – both in terms of the department’s ability to deliver the service, as well as from a financial perspective.

The media are often quick to jump on stories of government digital initiatives that have spiraled in cost, so the ability to ‘work smarter, not harder’, and to identify immediate, future and shared efficiencies, will help to maximize your resources and ensure your digital service makes headlines for all the right reasons.

Shared services

Gartner defines shared services as: a dedicated unit (including people, processes and technologies) that is structured as a centralized point of service and is focused on defined business functions.¹ For local government organizations, the ability to start a shared service offering with neighboring authorities (or those with a common goal) can help to share significant IT costs – from cloud hosting to platform costs.

While it's vital to set out clear lines of communication, so that all councils or organizations involved understand roles, responsibilities and entitlements for factors such as support and upgrades, the cost-savings can be astronomical. In fact, the Australian government won praise last year, when it was revealed that shared service arrangements had helped them to save taxpayers more than \$70 million.²



Shared service arrangements [save] the taxpayer over £1.34bn in cumulative efficiency"

**Lord Porter of Spalding,
Chair of the Local Government Association (2015)**

1. Shared Services or Shared Services Center, Gartner
2. Govt Shared Services Push Already Clawing Back Millions, IT News, April 2019

Design systems

Another simple yet highly effective method of demonstrating efficiency is to avoid reinventing the wheel. Many local governments fall into the trap of assuming they can't replicate sites or services as their customer needs are unique; but they're often surprisingly common.

Design systems offer councils the ability to spin up new websites and services using pre-existing templates that already meet accessibility standards and government branding, but with enough flexibility to stand out as a separate organization. Governments all over the world are starting to realize the logic of creating reusable design systems for digital initiatives; including the US Web Design System, the GOV.UK Design System and the Australian DTA's Design System.

Accessibility

Compliance with WCAG 2.1 Level AA is an essential consideration for any public sector digital services. Even so, accessibility remains a significant challenge for public sector organizations – and one that central governments are working hard to overcome. Revealing the extent of the problem, a recent study in the UK found that 4 in 10 local council homepages failed basic tests for accessibility.¹



We know that digital services can make many people's lives much easier, but we must also look after those who cannot access or use technology.

Digital Transformation Agency, 2020

1. Top Five Most Common Accessibility Issues, Soctim, July 2020

Personalization

A personalized service can have a huge impact on adoption and satisfaction rates, with a recent survey revealing that 44% of citizens want public service agencies to collaborate with companies like Amazon and Airbnb, in order to provide more personalized experiences.¹ In order to create a personalized service, local governments should consider some of the following techniques:

Dynamic website content: for example, presenting returning website visitors with content that they explored previously. This can be made especially powerful when users are having to repeat laborious self-service tasks.

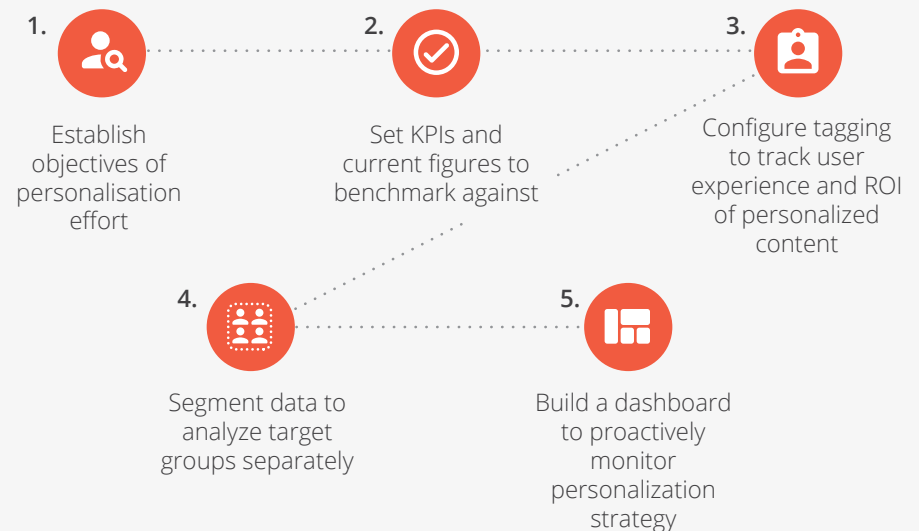
Personalized offers/deals: for example, by identifying visitors as first-time users, they can be presented with exclusive offers. Likewise, visitors that have signed up for specific portions of the site can be rewarded for doing so. E.g. First-time visitors to specific council facilities or service pages could be offered a special deal.

1. What People Want: Public Service Global Citizen Survey, Accenture, July 2017

Targeted email marketing: sending email campaigns to a recognized subset of users based on leveraged data and information held about them.

Targeted advertising: placing online ads based on demographics or previous customer behavior. For example, advertising recycling guidelines on local Facebook community groups.

When starting a personalization program, we recommend the following process to enable successful measurement, analysis and optimization:



Squiz DXP for local governments

Councils looking to increase digital service delivery and uptake, and match customer experience to their community's expectations, require a DXP that enables both digital service build-out and control of the customer experience.

The Squiz Digital Experience Platform (DXP) is tailor made for Local Government. Unlike other DXPs that have a pure consumer and e-commerce focus, Squiz DXP is designed with and for service-based organizations, offering innovative, industry-specific capabilities for federal, state and local governments.

Squiz's software and services were built to give organizations the ability to deliver open, fast and flexible websites, digital applications and other digital experiences needed to create and choreograph powerful digital customer experiences. Additionally, Squiz also offers a fully customizable website development framework that gives you the best of both worlds; the efficiencies and prebuilt website components of a template, without looking like everyone else.

The Squiz DXP is tailor made for Local Government



Automate manual processes with integration to all your back end systems.



Easily deploy smart forms, transforming your all of your PDFs into intuitive online forms.



Drive greatly enhanced customer experiences with personalization, to both your anonymous and logged in users. Personalization can be set up by any content editor in minutes.



Deliver highly accessible websites and content with built in tools that highlight accessibility issues, and give you on screen resolutions.



Drive down the ongoing cost of ownership and benefit from inter-council collaboration.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a bright red button-down shirt and dark jeans, is sitting on a light-colored sofa. She is looking down at a silver laptop in front of her, with her hands on the keyboard. In the foreground, there is a glass coffee table with a white notepad and a blue pen. The background is a blurred office or home workspace with shelves and plants.

SQUIZ

Get in touch

Get the insights and tools
essential for success

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 **Quiz** Digital Experience Platform