

# Customer Access Rethink, Redesign and Results

## Context

Customer First was created as a new service in 2004 as part of Blackpool Council's strategic transformation programme known as Changing Times and Access to Services. The new service was established to be the main contact and service resolution point for the Council with integration of all frontline services into the new customer centre. The thinking behind this was based on a customer centric approach for local government and assisted from e-Government funding from central government. The service had grown from a budget of around £500k to a budget close to £3million in 2006/7 and was nationally recognised as one of the best approaches to putting the customer first.

Significant investment had been made in the technologies to support the service including a corporate wide CRM system procured via an EU open tender in 2003, call centre telephony, queue management and online services including a new Council and Community web sites. These systems along with the need to achieve the Customer First Access to Services strategy came with extra people needed to maintain and improve them. The total cost for just the support for the technology was over £800k in 2006/7.

## Business Needs

One of the main goals for the new service was to enable the Council to have a holistic service view of its customers and for the customer service agent to fully resolve most enquiries at the first point of contact. Following a review of the progress made in 2007, it became apparent that some of the ambitions and assumptions of the Access to Services strategy had a number of limitations and significant drawbacks:

- Customer demand was still growing
- Costs were rising significantly and no sign of cashable/tangible savings
- Disillusionment of CRM and the single view of the customer
- Needed to purchase more modules such as work flow, mobile, reporting etc.
- The IT design was getting more and more complex
- Difficult to integrate services and IT systems – costs of adaptors were expensive and usually disappointing in terms of the end product
- Inflexible to change business needs
- Double typing due to expensive integration
- Took too long to change a process having to configure multiple systems
- Difficult to get meaningful data from the CRM system
- Large overhead of administration/development managing the work and IT systems
- A number of points of failure to flow work from end-to-end

“Although we were recognised as one of the best Customer Centres in the country, we were not able to answer the phones and deal with queues that were forming every day in the contact centre. This signalled the need to review and rethink what was happening, along with rising costs, very little tangible benefits in terms of cashable savings and fundamental problems with the way services were being integrated into the new way of working.” Sue McGraw, Head of Customer First

## Solution and Delivery

To achieve a design that worked from the customer's point of view and the needs of the service, the Customer Service Agents worked along with developers to come up with a solution that not only helped them do their job but improved the way work was flowed through the Council. Shared understanding of the problem, simplicity, sustainability and relevant accurate data were at the heart of the principals used in the design. Analysing the customer demand and determining the volumes and types led to the IT solution being designed to its optimum.

Enterprise Service Builder was used to replace the existing CRM system. As part of the Customer Access Strategy the system was implemented across the council with it becoming the largest business system used in Blackpool with over 3500 users.

- Sustainability – needs to be flexible and configurable by the service
- Mobile – work needs to be moved in real time to the right person to do the work
- Accessibility – data needed to be presented so easily accessible
- Geographical Information – all enquires or inspections to be map based
- Electronic – all processes to be completely electronic
- Interoperability – capable to interface to other systems
- Council Information – needed to be easily available

## Results

- Replaced costly IT systems with technology that worked significantly better
- Enabled end-to-end visibility of high frequency customer demands
- Reduced time needed to record data against the customer and freed up agents
- Over £600k savings on administration of the work per annum
- Software Licence costs reduced by 300% and less complex IT
- Real time accurate data that assist management and teams to make better decisions
- Assisted an overall annual reduction of budget of £1.5 million
- Significant savings in time taken to process transactions and cases
- A system capable of growing and changing to meet the needs of the Council

“After years of staff struggling with the CRM we finally have a system that the staff understand and find easy to use. We feel liberated from an original design that was actually making things worse.” Elaine Midgley, Customer First Manager

“The new technology gives me the ability to analyse the work through accurate data so I can influence change, something you could never do with the CRM we had previously.” Tina Osman, Customer First Manager