eThekwini Municipality

Customer Relations Management Strategy

His Worship the Mayor

The acid test when it comes to rating the performance of our municipality is providing an excellent customer service. It is important that the Municipality understands exactly who its customers are. These are not only the people who use our services. Our customers are also companies which the City of eThekwini has a transactional relationship with. Our customers include visitors and tourists to our City. Our customers also include a myriad of local, national and international people who come to eThekwini to conduct business.

Whilst the Municipality undoubtedly faces budgetary challenges, it is vital that we do not go about our "business as usual", but continue to enhance our services, in line with our customers' expectations. This should be done by keeping abreast of new and evolving technologies and creating new opportunities. This, in turn, will heighten the perception that the City of eThekwini is "making things happen".

Our Customer Relations Management Strategy details how the City of eThekwini aims to offer services that place customers' needs at the core of our business.

The City Manager

During the recent years of financial hardship, many people have said that customer service standards have declined across a number of industries. In reality, customers' expectations about the quality of services available to them have actually increased. This has happened in the wake of a technological revolution across all sectors, particularly against the backdrop of social media, online accounts and various applications.

When it comes to service quality, our City's customers expect unparalleled excellence. They want readily available information on all aspects of business that are undertaken by the City. In order to achieve this, it is vital that the frontline service Unit's offering exudes efficiency by employing staff who understand that every single action on their part has an impact on the customer. Staff should have the right tools at their disposal in order to perform their duties efficiently.

Our Customer Relations Management Strategy is designed to ensure that the City of eThekwini delivers an integrated, coherent and improved range of services to residents, visitors and businesses over the next five years. Our aim is to firmly put the customer first.

Introduction

The City of eThekwini boasts a diverse range of customers with varying needs. In the broadest sense, everyone who lives, works, visits or does business in the City of eThekwini will use a municipal service in one form or another – be it visiting one of our service centers, our leisure or tourist attractions, or simply walking down one of our streets.

The City is conscious of the need to provide an excellent service to existing and prospective commercial partners so that we can jointly develop and market the City of eThekwini as a place to work, live and preferably for inward investment.

The Municipality is making radical changes in the way it delivers services. We are also pursuing radical reform in the wake of current national and provincial plans such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the National Development Plan (NDP), the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (PGDS) and the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). These development plans will influence the strategic direction of the Municipality to improve the quality of life of our residents.

With these developments in the offing, we can already imagine the questions our customers will raise and the impact these changes will have on our social fibre. It is vital that the Customer Service offerings – across our face-to-face receptions, telephonic and online services – are geared towards meeting current and future demands.

1. Executive Summary

The theme of this strategy is *Accelerating the Customer Service Experience*. This theme is designed to set the tone for service transformation and the attainment of optimal customer satisfaction levels towards 2024/25 and beyond.

The theme further recognises and seeks to give effect to the essence of the City's vision, which states that: *"By 2030, eThekwini will enjoy the reputation of being Africa's most caring and liveable City, where everyone lives in harmony"*.

In line with this theme, the scope of this strategy focuses on critical pillars aimed at repositioning the customer service experience, as well as the sustainability of the Municipality's service delivery model.

The Customer Relations Management (CRM) Strategy seeks to facilitate and implement programmes aimed at strengthening customer relations and to rationalising customer services to achieve the ultimate customer satisfaction.

The Customer Service Unit developed the Customer Relations Management (CRM) strategy following research and stakeholder consultation. We conducted benchmarking on international best practices before coming up with the best model. We developed this model based on the efficient management and co-ordination of interrelated and interdependent components relevant to the Municipality's organisational goals and objectives.

This model will enhance our organisational capacity to meet customer needs and our obligations towards them. Central to the implementation of the model is the execution of the customer relations pillars, as prescribed by the City's Customer Relations Management Policy. This strategy gives effect to the five principles of service excellence, namely: ***customer needs, access to municipal services, first-time resolution of enquiries,*** *employee [well-being?]* ***and service improvement.***

2. Legislative Framework

This strategy derives its legal imperatives from the following prescripts:

- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996)
- Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act No. 32 of 2000)
- White Paper on Local Government, 1995
- Section F of the White Paper on the Transformation of Local Government, 1997
- Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act No. 117 of 1998)
- Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act No. 56 of 2003)
- Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act No. 1 of 1999, as amended)
- Division of Revenue Act
- *Batho Pele* principles
- Customer Relations Management Policy (eThekwini Municipality)

3. The Challenge

The Municipality is currently faced with diverse operational structures, resulting in the fragmentation of customer services. This has caused some units working in silos, a lack of internal or inter-connected relations when handling customer complaints, as well as inconsistencies. These inconsistencies affect our customer service provision.

4. The Purpose

The purpose of our Customer Relations Management (CRM) Strategy is:

- To strengthen relationships between the Municipality and its customers
- To align the provision of services to customers' needs
- To provide a quality service to customers for all service requirements; and
- To co-ordinate customer services provided by the Municipality.

5. Transformation Programme

5.1 Our Aim

The Customer Service Transformation Programme, which commenced during the 2013/14 financial year, aims to deliver the following:

The creation of a single front office dealing with all customer enquiries.

A customer service department staffed by multi-skilled customer service specialists who will work with the back office to deliver municipal services

A service which will resolve more customer enquiries at the first point of contact - wherever and however they choose to contact us

Removal of process duplication and unnecessary red tape so that we provide a more cost-effective and efficient frontline service

5.2 Strategic Objectives

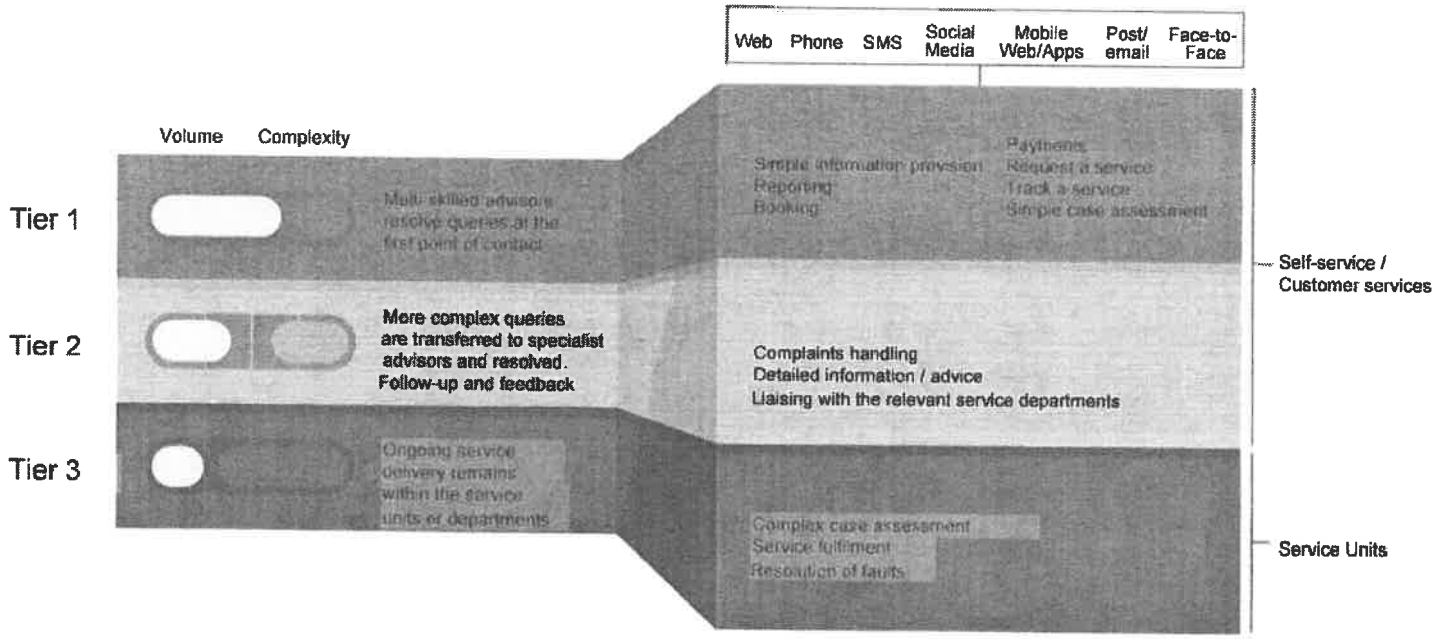
In order to comply with its constitutional obligations, the Municipality seeks to achieve the following strategic objectives:

Figure 1: Strategic objectives

5.3 Customer Relations Management (CRM) Model

The Customer Relations Management (CRM) Strategy consists of the CRM model, as illustrated in Figure 2 below:

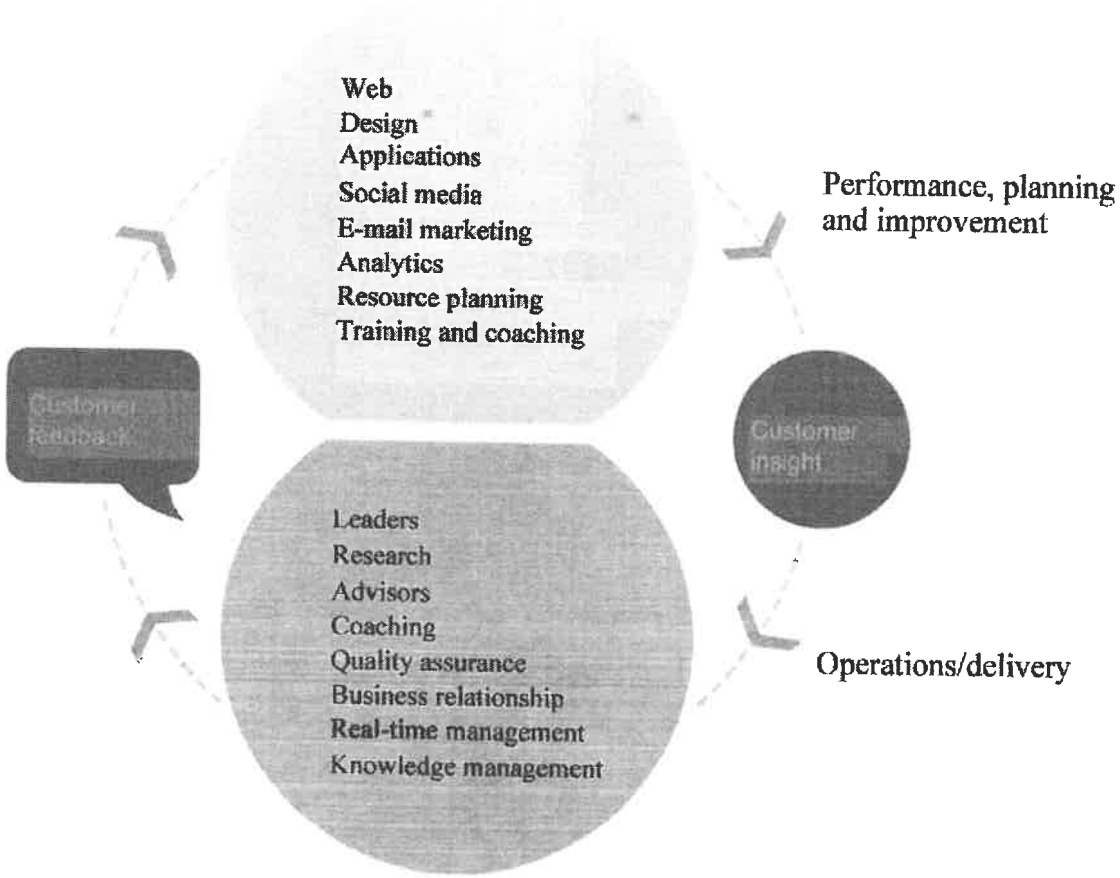
Figure 2: CRM Model



Implementation of the CRM model will result in the 'right people with the right skills, doing the right things at the right time in the right way.

5.4 Structure

The structure and functions are now in place to deliver the target CRM model



5.5 eThekwini Municipality's Approach to Channel Shift

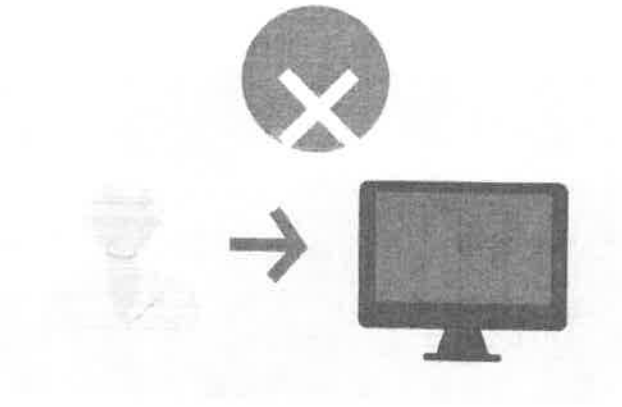
Face-to-face › Phone › SMS › E-mail › Web › Social Media › Apps

'Channel shift' – the eThekwini Municipality's Way

A channel shift is widely accepted to mean the migration of customer contact from costly channels to less costly channels.

We recognise that every contact counts – both to us from a financial perspective and in terms of our customers' individual needs.

Digital by default is when customers are forced to move to digital channels. This business process is redesigned with the primary purpose of removing any other channels through which customers can contact us or place a service request.



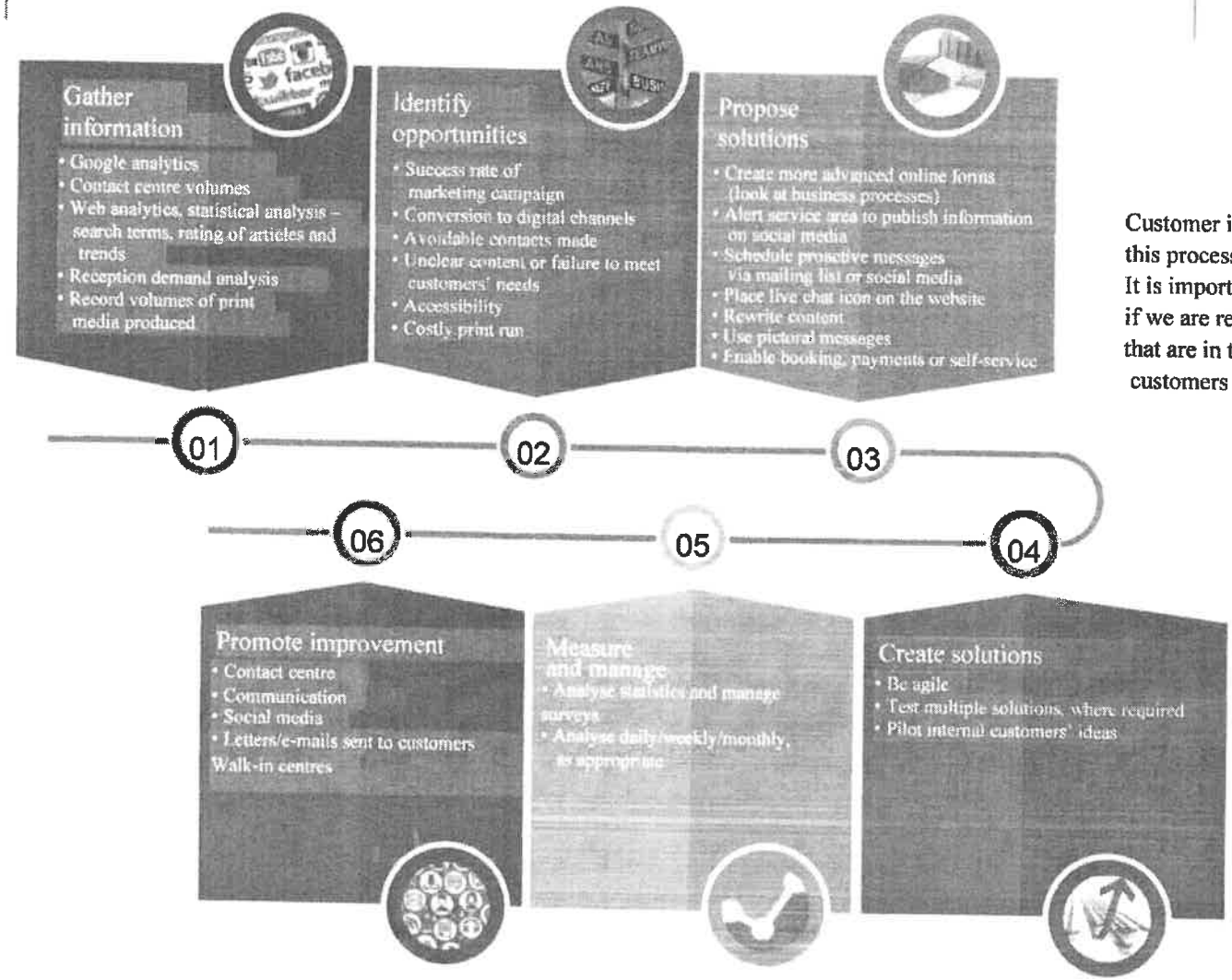
Rejected approach

Digital by design is when an end-to-end business process is reviewed in detail and areas deemed suitable for a channel shift are identified. Digital options can be made available to customers at salient stages of the enquiry or transaction process, otherwise the entire process can be migrated to a digital platform. This method places emphasis on due diligence and consideration for demographics, relevant processes and interventions sought by customers and the back office.

The consequence of this is that channels are expanded instead of being shut down. Customers who still wish to contact us via conventional channels will always be able to do so.

eThekwini Municipality's approach

5.6 Communications



Customer involvement throughout this process will lead to success
It is important to question if we are rendering or building services that are in tune with the reality of how customers behave and wish to contact us.

5.7 Interdependencies

The Municipality is committed to becoming a "stronger municipality that is ready and able to deliver change". We need to understand internal programme dependencies and synergies. and competent, and capable council transformation programme (what does this have to do with the first part of the paragraph?).

The Customer Service team will be able to efficiently locate relevant information in relation to customers' requests in real-time. The team should also take into account customers' preferred contact channel.

ICT Strategy

Our ICT team will be required to integrate front and back office technologies. This intuitive technology will be vital in achieving a 'channel shift' and the 'digital by design' approach.

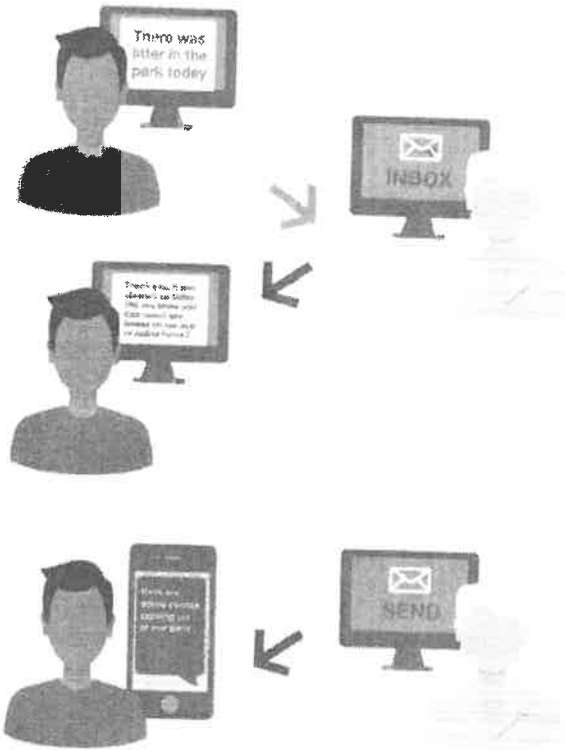
The ICT strategy sets out to 'deliver better, trusted public services' and commits to being customer centric. Through this strategy, we find bold and innovative ways of working. The ICT department will procure a new digital engagement platform which will offer the Customer Service team the desired single dashboard of the customer and enable engagement through a number of contact channels – SMSs, Apps, a 'My Account' on the municipal website, social media and other emerging channels. This will further support the delivery of the Customer Relations model.

This platform will be accessible to our partners and the public who would do business digitally, the same way in which they would do with any other service provider.

5.7.1 Communications Strategy

A matrix working relationship between Customer Service and the corporate communications teams is imperative in ensuring that our customers receive the messages they expect and wish to hear instantly. This matrix approach is also important for effectively and efficiently marketing our digital offerings.

The joint implementation of an email marketing solution by both the corporate communication and web teams within Customer Services will enable the Municipality to conduct targeted marketing of events, as well as new policies and initiatives in the City. This marketing solution will also promote novel ways of doing business with the Municipality across digital channels. The web team is well placed in Customer Services to observe call volumes and receptions, thereby identifying new priorities for a channel shift.



This vision is echoed across our social media platforms and monitoring tools. These platforms are managed in collaboration with the corporate communications team.

These avenues to 'push' information to customers are best utilised when customer insight is considered – what information have customers elected to hear, what are they already contacting us about, which pages have they been visiting on the website? The Customer Service team can glean a great deal of information from these channels to determine new ways of working, improving services and obtaining continuous feedback during every step of the customer journey.

This business intelligence between the two teams will ensure the best value for money. If Customer Services know that posters in the City about an event/sign-up campaign are not reaching customers, we can review our strategy and refocus our in-house marketing resources and spend.

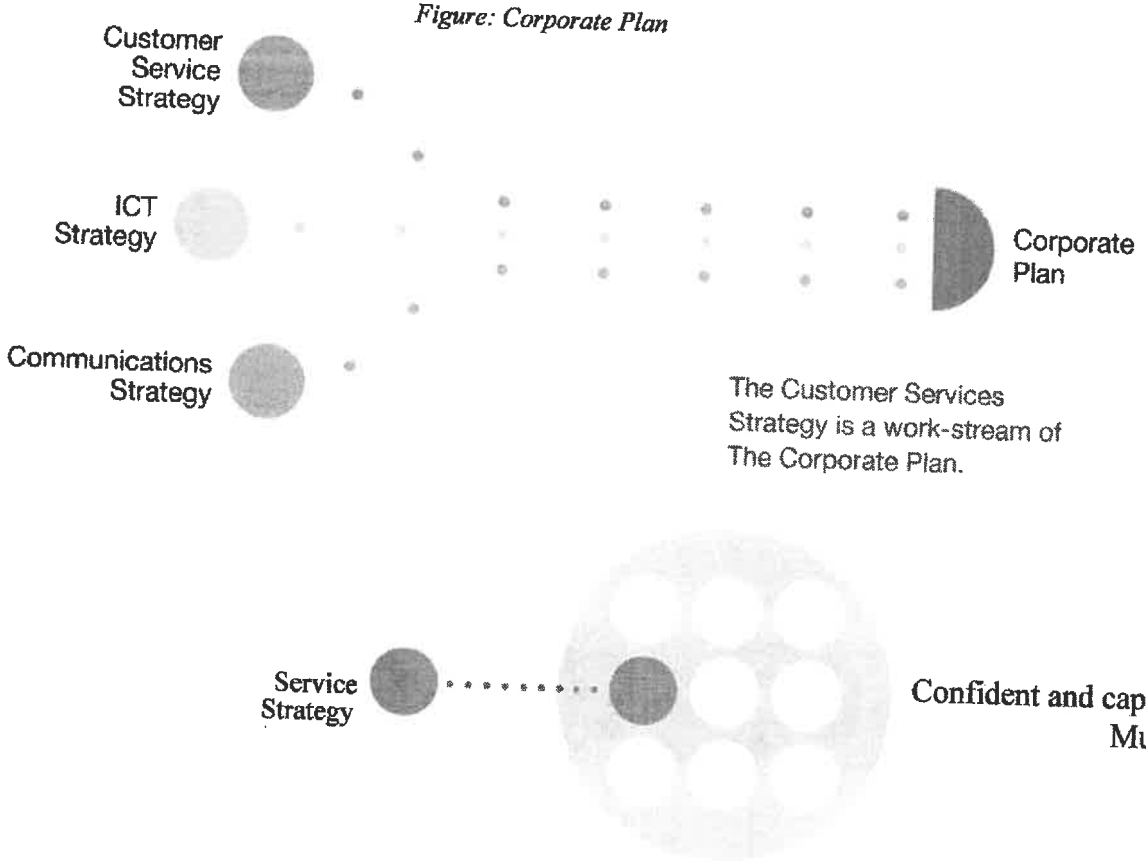
Digital Inclusion Strategy: The Customer Service team should understand and champion the digital inclusion strategy in order to increase public access, capability and interest in digital channels.

Frontline staff should be well equipped to support customers with the move to more cost-effective self-service platforms.

5.8 Customer Relations Management Strategy

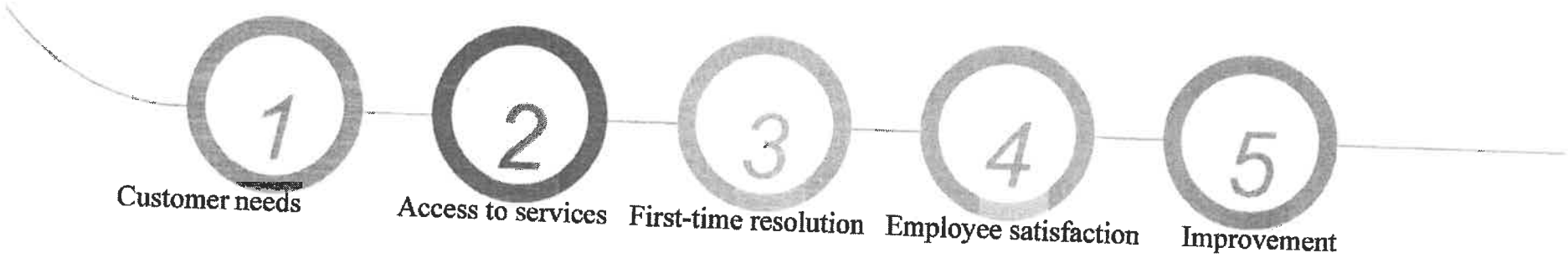
The CRM Strategy is an important component of the City's Integrated Development Plan

Figure: Corporate Plan



5.9 Five principles of excellent customer service

In order to deliver our vision, we have identified five key customer service principles:



Customer Needs

1

We will put the user at the heart of service design and delivery to ensure that we provide responsive, joined-up services that are inclusive and customer focussed.

Overview

Through the Customer Service Integration project, we will use current customer contact activities across the Municipality as a baseline to broaden service provision. We will identify and define opportunities to better meet customer needs in order to redesign business processes.

This process will be repeated, continually evaluated and remodeled to achieve a fully integrated approach to customer service across the Municipality.

Commitments

- We will listen to and understand customer intentions and trends.
- We will regularly conduct and review customer satisfaction surveys across all channels.
- We will review operating hours to meet customer needs.
- We will redesign process so that customers contact us only once, wherever possible
- We will ensure that the Municipality is business friendly.
- We will create a single customer approach so that customers' needs are best identified and met

Review customer services and customers at our centres through the future space programme

- We will ensure information security and data privacy are at the heart of any service redesign.
- We will conduct essential handover to back office services seamlessly.

Access to Municipal Services

2

We will provide easily accessible services and information promptly and in a way that reflect our customers' preferences, needs and circumstances. This will include, as a Priority, the development and implementation of a Channel Management System for the Municipality's website to facilitate a channel shift when this is desired by our customers.

Overview

The 'digital by design' ethos will be embedded across the development of all channels of communication. Communication channels will not work exclusively, but in conjunction with one another to meet our customers' needs.

Commitments

- We will put in place effective branding to ensure customer confidence when doing business with the Municipality.
- We will engage, reach out and respond to our customers in real time through channels of their choice.
- We will ensure digital inclusion in any development of customer services.
- We will continually develop and evaluate our telephone system. For example, numbering, menu Options and call-back functions.
- We will provide interpreting services across all channels.
- We will set and review customer service standards for any written communication to ensure customer-centric language or approach.
- We will promote and assist with online self-service and other digital channels to improve customer experience.
- We will benchmark against the Government (GDS) as best practice both locally and nationally on latest technologies and platforms
- We will subject all projects and activities to equalities and data privacy impact assessments.

First-time Resolution

3

By getting it right the first time, we will reduce the need for customers to repeatedly contact us because we have failed to deliver a service or information.

Overview

Customer Services will undertake effective internal and external stakeholder engagements, ensuring that advisors and channels have the most up-to-date and relevant information to assist in a customer enquiry or service request.

Commitments

- We will deliver 'Tier 1' and 'Tier 2' functions in the CRM model model across the organisation.
- We will join up data across services to remove unnecessary delays in providing information and/or updates to customers.
- We will prioritise putting in place technology on our digital channels to enable first-time resolution and to afford customers greater choice and easier access to services.
- We will measure first point of contact and repeat contact to better understand and identify areas for improvement.
- We will provide transparent management information and reports to senior managers and the public.
- We will provide effective guidance to customer service staff for all enquiries and diagnostic tools.
- Where further investigation is Required, we will collect contact details and record customers' preferred method of contact.
- When something is not working, we will look at the business process from start to finish – no plaster fixes.
- We will refer customers to appropriate organisations where we cannot assist.

Employees

4

We will ensure that employees have the skills and abilities to deliver effective, customer focused services, are encouraged to work in a collaborative way and have a role in identifying and developing improvements.

Overview

Customer Services will champion service excellence standards of across the internal departments and The entire organisation.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

Commitments

- We will use a balanced scorecard to measure skills and competencies within the Customer Service department.
- We will promote transparency about customer feedback policies and procedures.
- We will lead in the development of customer service 'soft skills'.
- We will produce and maintain mandatory e-learning and face to face customer service training for all frontline employees.
- We will provide guidance on dealing with difficult or aggressive customers.
- We will encourage employees to persuade customers about the benefits of online self-service and the 'best fit' for their needs.
- We will conduct regular monitoring and put in place a clear process for peer reviews and feedback from service areas regarding the quality of service that our employees render.
- We will aspire to promote our internal values and conduct.
- We will motivate and maintain high staff morale by cultivating a culture of lateral thinking and encouraging their suggestions.

Service improvement

5

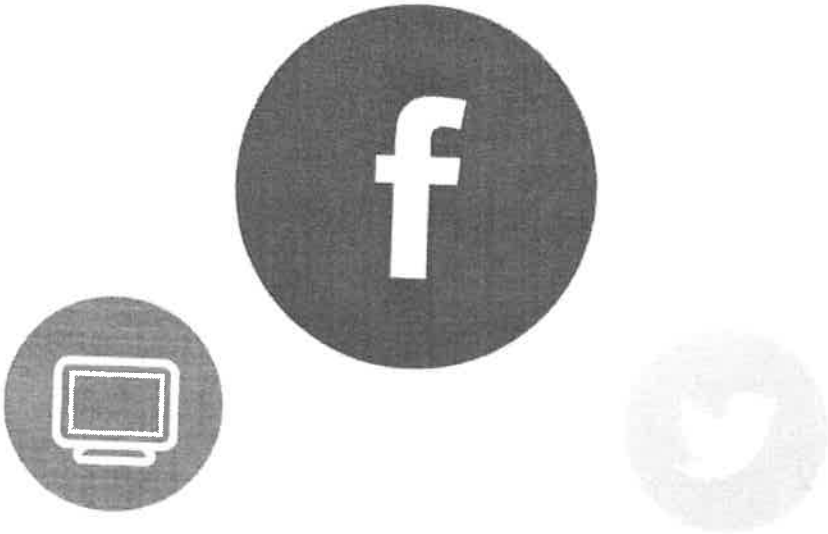
We will use customer and staff feedback, business intelligence and performance reporting to achieve continuous service improvement.

Overview

Whilst all principles are important, the fifth one is key and is at the core of our customers' expectations We expect to make intelligence driven decision making with regard to service improvement.

Commitments

- We will use customer feedback to improve service offerings.
- We will encourage instantaneous customer feedback.
- We will create a framework for monitoring and improving customer service delivery across the organisation.
- We will inpoint repeat issues and understand the customers affected by those issues.
- We will consult customers through focus groups and other mediums to glean desired improvements.
- We will learn from our mistakes
- We will improve the way we share customer service delivery information enabling back office functions to improve end-to-end business process.
- We will ensure consistency in our customer service standards.
- We will put in place service level agreements for those that we render in order to ensure a two-way service improvement commitment.
- We will use channel analytics such as statistical analytics and surveys to understand customer behaviour and identify opportunities for improvement.
- We will share and promote positive customer feedback and compliments.



The City's Vision –*"By 2030, eThekwini will enjoy the reputation of being Africa's most caring and liveable City, where everyone lives in harmony".*

Our Action Plan

Customer Needs

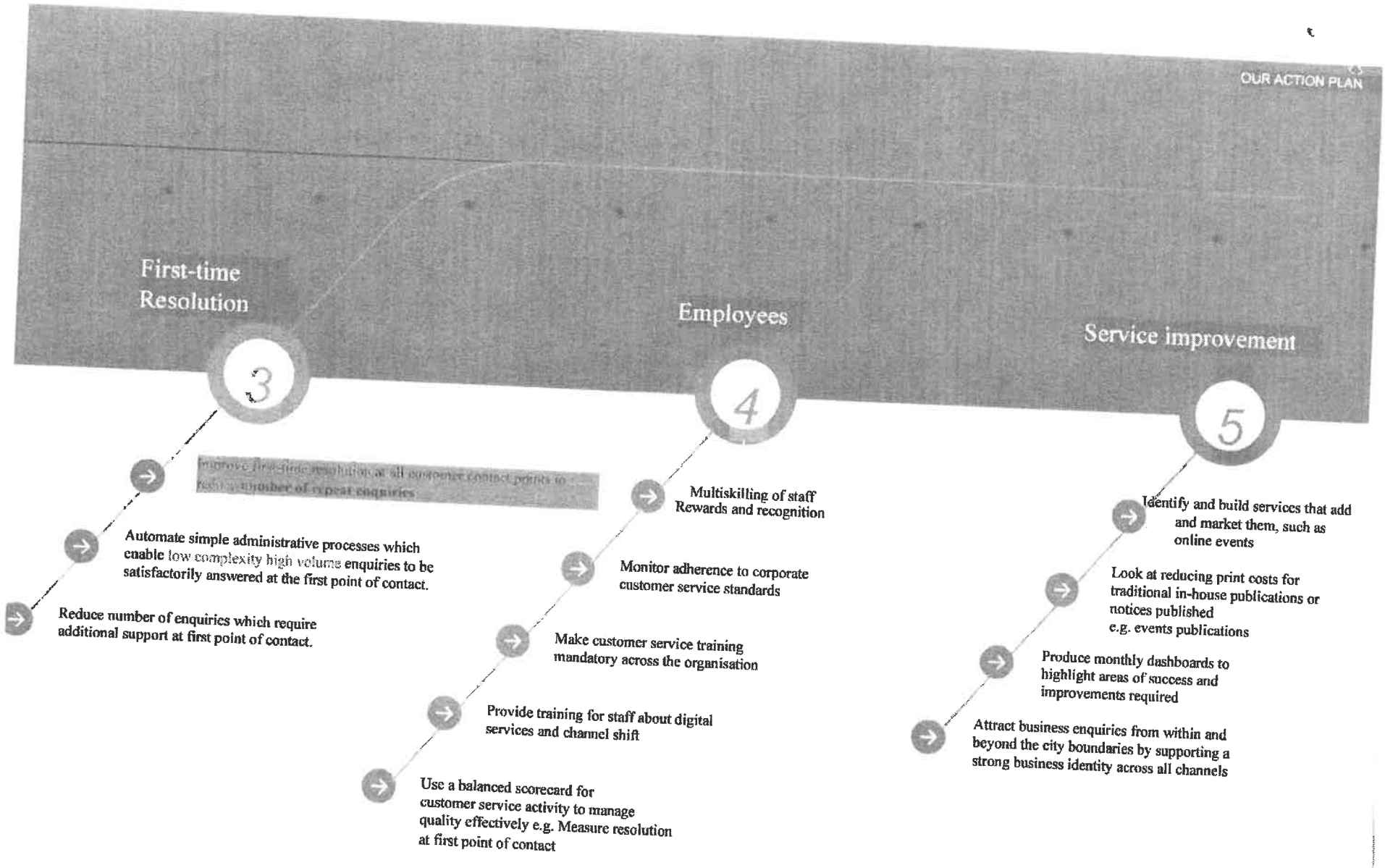
1

- Implement the CRM Model
- Provide customers with automated notifications to confirm action or progress of an enquiry, e.g. bin orders, pothole repairs
- Use the email subscription list to reach out to customers pre-empting their needs, e.g. 'You previously attended this event, why not…'
- Produce 'Apps' where trends indicate a benefit to the customer
- Engage in matrix working with the Corporate Communications team to manage social media channels

Access to Municipal Services

2

- Support the procurement and implementation of the new digital engagement/CRM platform
- Develop a 'My Account' function for customers to self-serve
- Introduce 'Live Chat' to support online self-service.
- Provide self-service kiosks at reception points and malls
- Promote digital access points for customers, e.g. libraries
- Reduce turnaround times for emails, social media and emerging channels
- Take service to the people


First-time Resolution
3
Improve first-time resolution at all customer contact points to reduce number of repeat enquiries
Automate simple administrative processes which enable low complexity high volume enquiries to be satisfactorily answered at the first point of contact.
Reduce number of enquiries which require additional support at first point of contact.
Employees
4
Multiskilling of staff
Rewards and recognition
Monitor adherence to corporate customer service standards
Make customer service training mandatory across the organisation
Provide training for staff about digital services and channel shift
Use a balanced scorecard for customer service activity to manage quality effectively e.g. Measure resolution at first point of contact
Service improvement
5
Identify and build services that add and market them, such as online events
Look at reducing print costs for traditional in-house publications or notices published
e.g. events publications
Produce monthly dashboards to highlight areas of success and improvements required
Attract business enquiries from within and beyond the city boundaries by supporting a strong business identity across all channels