



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

YEAR:
2012

STATUS:
Laureate

Organization:
Texas Health and Human Services Commission

Organization URL:
<http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/>

Project Name:
Customer Flow Management

What social/humanitarian issue was the project designed to address? What specific metrics did you use to measure the project's success?

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) addressed office crowding and excessive wait times for services in the local eligibility offices where Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) customers are served. A customer flow management system has been implemented in 53 local eligibility offices. The goal of the customer flow management system was to increase the efficiency of the office operations by decreasing wait times in the lobbies and to increase the quality of customer service the agency provides. The customer flow management system was designed to: 1. provide a streamlined method for managing customer traffic in the lobbies of benefit offices, 2. assist management with determining front desk staffing needs, and 3. provide better overall customer service. After a pilot of the implementation in three offices with the customer flow management system, a survey was conducted to determine the level of customer satisfaction. Prior to the installation of the system, the survey evaluated wait times for specific services provided by HHSC. The survey also provided guidance on the volume of traffic encountered by the pilot offices. The results of the survey showed decreased wait times for various services and those customers familiar with services in the offices indicated a high rating of customer satisfaction in comparison to previous experiences in the office.

Please describe the technologies used and how those technologies were deployed in an innovative way. Also, please include any technical or other challenges that were overcome for the successful implementation of the project.

HHSC obtained NEMO-Q (www.nemo-q.com), a customer flow management tool, in 53 eligibility offices. The system includes a small desktop kiosk (see Appendix 1) that generates a ticket with a number dependent on one of eight different types of services. The options for services are then tracked through a software queuing system. Each reception window and/or door to the back of the offices where customers are served has numbers displayed as indicators. Each lobby has a monitor (see Appendix 2) that displays the ticket number and window for service of the next customer. The system allows an immediate view into the types of services being requested by customers. Each customer takes a ticket number which represents their turn in the queue line. The customer then has a seat in the lobby, where a monitor displays their number as well as information related to receiving HHSC services. The customer sits and waits for their number to be displayed. The system allows the manager to monitor the lobby from their desk in the back of the office or across the state. Implementation and installations were fairly simple with very few challenges. The greatest challenge was the change in mind-set for technology support staff and validating the queuing system did not have an impact to other system performances. After the first few installations, all others went very smoothly. We have also confirmed there is no impact to bandwidth or other supporting technologies.

Please list the specific humanitarian benefits the project has yielded so far.

The benefits of the customer flow management tool include tremendous improvements to customer service. The wait time for services has decreased in all offices with the tool. Additionally, those customers in the office to drop off papers or other quick services do not have to wait behind customers waiting for services that take longer and require more attention. The lobbies are more organized and customers do not appear as restless waiting on services. Also, because customers are not standing in lines, more privacy is afforded each customer as they are served without another customer standing right behind them. Additional benefits include less time for staff staying beyond normal work hours to serve all waiting customers. Because wait times are less, there are few customers waiting to be served at the end of the day. The queuing system allows the manager to change priorities of services as well as employ more staff for particular services waiting in the lobby.

Please provide the best example of how the project has benefited a specific individual, enterprise or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work.

The staff in the local offices have expressed great satisfaction with the system because they no longer deal with frustrated clients waiting to be served. Customers that have been to the offices previously openly recognize the difference the system provides to the lobby through the appearance of greater organization of the office, neater and more professional. A supervisor in one of the first offices receiving NEMO-Q said it was the greatest thing she has ever seen HHSC do in her 25 years with the agency.