Towards Effective Service Delivery via Customer Relationship Management

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Abstract

The White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service (Batho Pele) served as the cornerstone of introducing the Principles of Batho Pele to further and enhance the agenda for service delivery. One of the critical principles of Batho Pele is that of its customer focus. This principle is premised on a value and relationship management perspective. Today much emphasis is placed on customer satisfaction, and to regularly interface with the customers whom we are called to serve in the public domain. This paper examines the notion of customer relationship management and its role in service delivery, focusing on a few trends and a model thus creating an enabling environment for effective and efficient service delivery. The emphasis is not only on communication, but also on organisational and process approaches to ensure goal-oriented actions.

Introduction

The South African Government launched an ambitious initiative – Batho Pele or '*People First*' – a public service improvement programme across the nation at all levels. One element of this programme is the change engagement which promotes a new public service belief set: 'We belong, We care, We serve!' To comply with Batho Pele, government

departments and parastatals must set and measure standards of their services. Batho Pele utilises visits, spot-checks and inspections to assess compliance with its requirements. There is tremendous pressure upon public institutions to ensure that they deliver quality services and to promote and manage its relationship with customers. In this regard, the concept of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is gaining momentum in the quest for enhanced service delivery, both in the private and public sectors.

Public services can be made more sensitive to the requirements, preferences and expectations of the people who use them. There has been a progression in government policy towards service design and customer care. The introduction of the Citizens' Charter by several public institutions represent an approach based on predetermined standards and a measurement system designed to find out whether those standards had been met. The standards ought to be visible in places where the public receive services. Government has showed its commitment towards the citizenry by placing them at the centre of its transformational drive (Ngema 2003: 42).

This paper emphasises the notion of CRM in the public domain as a focus on allocating resources to managing the relationship between public institutions and the customers, such relationship is informed by customers' needs and resource-oriented actions on the part of public institutions. The concept of CRM is rooted in the marketing concept and emphasises the key aspect of being customer-centric. The customer-centric perspective is highlighted in the Principles of Batho Pele which has become a statutory benchmark for enhancing the service delivery agenda. Through the Batho Pele Principles, public institutions are obliged to render quality services to the growing populace. There is tremendous pressure on public institutions to promote a results-oriented, performance-driven approach focusing on outputs and outcomes, and ensuring that the relationship between the public sector and customers are influenced by responsiveness to service needs and service quality and efficiency, hence the popular term: a value-for-money approach.

Definition of Key Terms

There are several definitions that focus on CRM. For the purposes of this
paper, some of the more salient terms are defined hereunder:

1.1   CRM entails all aspects of interaction a company has with its customers, whether it be sales or service-related. CRM is an information industry term for methodologies, software and internet capabilities that help an enterprise manage customer relationships in an organised way.

http://www.creotec.com/index.php?p=74&pp=08.title=read_more

1.2   CRM is a vast way of approach to customers in an attempt to realise their living style in every field of life and eventually to influence them to change their life style towards their benefit and direction through the company initiating ceaseless communication of direct, implicative and inspiring suggestion so that the company may attract new customers and bind existing customers with the company. http://www.3gnewsroom.com/ html/glossary/c.shtml

1.3   CRM focuses on improving interaction with customers with a view to increasing customer satisfaction and public confidence in service delivery.

Orientation Towards Customer Relationship Management

The public service is becoming more sensitive to the requirements, preferences and expectations of the customers whom it is called to serve. Government policies are geared towards service design and customer care. Citizens can now engage with government in the manner of their choosing and it this presents a profound shift in how government structures its services (Phala 2007: 82). Important aspects such are access, speed of delivery, service quality, regular consultation, privacy, being treated with dignity and respect are being weighted as the foundation of managing customer relationships. The notion of a service-user orientation and customer-orientation is an important determinant when interacting with customers. Of necessity, is the question of how to

organize the process of listening to the service users and responding to their basic needs.

Some key aspects relating to customer orientation can be summed as follows:

Customers, Voters and Citizens

There is a wide relationship between customers and public organisations and the people who use their services. The key element is that of responsiveness, which can occur at different levels. A customer care approach is limited to providing a welcome attitude, including a smile and a presentable reception area. A more responsive approach would be designed to deliver the service in a way which reflects people's wishes. Even greater responsiveness would give the service user control over the level of service they can receive. Given the variety of relationships and degrees of responsiveness, managers of public services have a subtle job to do in making their services more responsive to customers (Flynn 2007: 152-3).

Citizenship and Entitlement

The definition of citizenship rights is left to the organizations running the state. Individuals as citizens cannot individually define and exercise their rights other than by voting. Citizenship rights are very different from consumer rights. Consumers exercise their entitlements by spending money and by invoking the law. Citizens have recourse to law, to rules and norms defined by the state and to those elements of redress laid down in various aspects i.e. Citizens Charter, Batho Pele. The lack of definition leaves discretion for managers to interpret the manner in which they manage the relationship with customers (Flynn 2007: 153).

Vouchers, Cash and Customer Control

These include the use of vouchers and/or cash to give service users customer control of their services such as the allowance for people with disabilities to buy their own vehicles, the disability living allowance or

vouchers for home care. People with disabilities argue for the extension of such schemes rather than having to choose services which have been designed and provided by someone else. The important point to note here is that mechanisms must be put in place to enable people to exercise their power by virtue of their physical conditions (Flynn 2007: 155). The South African public sector is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities are provided with reasonable access to services (through infrastructure and physically).

Market Research

There is now widespread use of market research to find out what users of public services think of them. Public institutions now want to regularly conduct research on levels of satisfaction and attitudes to individual services. Without market research, approaches to customer satisfaction or quality are likely to be based on managers' ideas about what is important rather than on service users' responses (Flynn 2007: 156).

Charters and Standards

The introduction of citizens' charters and standards is about giving more power to the citizen. What are equally important are the responsibilities in providing a public service. Citizens' charters are not only about accountability and standards, but include: standards, openness, information, choice, non-discrimination, accessibility and redress – which are closely related to the Principles of Batho Pele. To ensure that the key aspects of the Citizen's Charter in the South African public sector is upheld, government decided to include more emphasis on privatisation of state-owned assets, wider competition to reduce monopolies and control prices, further contracting out (Public-Private Partnerships), more performance-related pay (performance-based contracts and performance plans), published performance targets (focusing on outputs and outcomes), publication of information standards achieved (service standards), more effective complaints procedures, tougher and more independent inspectorates (audits) and better redress. Further criteria includes *inter alia:*

- Setting standards and performing well

- Actively engaging with customers
- Being fair and accessible to everyone
- Developing and effecting improvements
- Use resources effectively and innovatively

      (Flynn 2007: 158).

Participatory Democracy

A more difficult managerial task is to assist the political process to make decisions about what services to provide and to whom. This is especially difficult at times when funds are being cut: decisions about what to subtract are harder than those about what to add on. The elements of support for the political process are: an evaluation of services and their impact, rather than only budgets and the way in which they are spent, distributional impact of changes in services, options among which political choices can be made.

Managing customer relations in the public domain can be more challenging and complicated than that of the private sector. People have rights as citizens as well as customers. There is a choice of ways of making services more accessible, bearing in mind the measure of customer satisfaction. What is clear is that creating customer satisfaction with public services does not happen automatically by target setting or by setting up market-type mechanisms. Targets only reflect managers' views about the service, and virtually all the markets established stop short of giving service users, whether real empowerment or just by consulting them through market research (Flynn 2007: 167-8).

Legislative Framework for Enhancing Service Delivery

There is several legislation that currently informs the agenda for enhancing service delivery in the public sector. Some of the pertinent legislation is discussed very briefly hereunder:

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 Of 1996)

Section 2 of the Constitution highlights that

> this Constitution is the supreme law of the Republic, law or conduct inconsistent with it is invalid, and the obligations imposed by it must be fulfilled.

Furthermore, in Section 197(1), it is stipulated

> within public administration there is a public service for the Republic, which must function and be structured in terms of national legislation, and which must loyally execute the lawful policies of the *government-of-the-day*.

Section 195(1) of the Constitution focuses on the conduct of all public officials in all three spheres of government. Section 195(1) provides that 'Public administration must be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution'. Values emphasised in Section 1 of the Constitution are human dignity, the achievement of equality, the advancement of human rights and freedoms, non-racialism and non-sexism. In Section 195(1), further principles that focus on public service delivery are listed hereunder as follows:

- services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias;
- people's needs must be responded to and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making;
- efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted;
- transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information; and
- public administration must be development-oriented.

White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995

The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS) was published on 24 November 1995 and focuses on transformation of service delivery. The key aim of the WPTPS is

> …to establish a framework to guide the introduction and implementation of new policies and legislation aimed at transforming the South African public service.

The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1997 (WPTPS) emphasise the transformation of the South African Public Service into a coherent, representative, competent and democratic instrument for executing government policies and meeting the needs of the people. It is guided by the following principles:

- committed to the provision of high quality services to all South Africans in
- an unbiased and impartial manner;
- responsive to the needs of the public;
- representative of all sections and levels of South African society;
- democratic in its internal procedures and in its relations with the public;
- accessible, informative, accountable and open to public scrutiny;
- efficient, effective and productive.

White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997

The notion of putting *'People First'* in respect of public service delivery is set out in the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (WPTPSD, 1997). Chapter 11 of the White Paper identified the following strategies to promote and improve the quality of service delivery:

- mission statement for service delivery, together with service guarantees;

- services to be provided, to which groups, and at which service charges;

- priorities, the principle of affordability, and the principle of redirecting resources to areas and groups previously under-resourced;

- service standards, defined outputs and targets, and performance indicators; benchmarked against comparable international standards;

- monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and structures, designed to measure progress and introduce corrective action, where appropriate;

- plans for staffing, human resource development and organisational capacity building, tailored to service delivery needs;

- redirection of human and other resources from administrative tasks to service provision, particularly for disadvantaged groups and areas;

- financial plans that link budgets directly to service needs and personnel plans;

- potential partnerships with the private sector, NGOs or community organizations will provide more effective forms of service delivery; and

- development of a culture of customer care and of approaches to service delivery that is sensitive to issues of race, gender and disability.

According to Fox (2005: 59-60), the concept customer can be perceived as suitable in the context of improving public service delivery because it encompasses certain principles that are fundamental as public service delivery as they are to the provision of services for commercial gain.

- Treating the inhabitants as customers can imply the following:

- Listening to the views of customers and taking cognizance thereof when making decisions about which services should be rendered;

- Respecting all customers with respect;

- Ensuring that the promised quality of service delivery is consistent and of the highest standard;

- Being considerate and responding sympathetically as well as rapidly should the level of service excellence fall below the promised standard.

Batho Pele Principles Versus Business Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

In aligning service delivery to the notion of CRM, there are some aspects of the Batho Pele Principles that can be compared with CRM as a business strategy.

Some pertinent aspects are discussed as follows:

'BUSINESS' CRM	*'BATHO PELE'* CRM
The intention is to allow the formation of individualised relationships with customers, with the aim of improving customer satisfaction and maximising profits, identifying the most profitable customers and providing them with the highest level of service. http://searchcrm.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid11_gci213567,00.html	Value-for-Money focuses on public services being provided economically and efficiently. Attention is drawn to organisational structures and processes to ensure productivity. Informing customers about the cost of services and get their input about value for money. Batho Pele Principle – White Paper on Batho Pele, 1997

Providing employees with the information and processes necessary to know their customers, understand their needs, and effectively build relationships between the company, its customer base and distribution partners. http://searchcrm.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid11_gci213567,00.html	Provision of information that is full and accurate about the public services customers are entitled to receive, and to ensure consultation regarding information. Batho Pele Principle – White Paper on Batho Pele, 1997
Helping an enterprise to enable its marketing departments to identify and target their best customers, manage marketing campaigns with clear goals and objectives, and generate quality leads for the sales teams. http://searchcrm.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid11_gci213567,00.html	Access - All citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled. The focus is on consultation and setting of targets, eliminating barriers and increasing access through co-operation and alternate service delivery. Batho Pele Principle – White Paper on Batho Pele, 1997

Quite simply, business CRM provides customers with choices. Therefore, businesses must protect their most profitable customers with incentives. However, in the public domain, there is no choice and all customers must be served efficiently, effectively and through economic use of public resources.

Therefore, in adopting the CRM strategy, one must be cautious to contextualise the concept within a public domain.

Customer Relationship Management: A Focused Approach

There are seven key steps to customer orientation, as highlighted by Pegler (2002: 42). These steps are closely aligned to the Principles of Batho Pele.

They are depicted as follows:

Step 1: Define customer satisfaction goals and strategy

It is important to know who your customers are and to identify the

institution's goals, thus setting targets to realize the goals according to customers' needs.

Step 2: Segment the customer-base

The service expectations of the diverse group of customers must be factored when engaging in service delivery.

Step 3: Identify key needs and performance gaps

It is incumbent on institutions to identify the key needs, and gaps in performance and strive towards effecting continuous improvement.

Step 4: Develop programmes to improve performance

The notion of customer-orientation must be embraced by institutions in their quest to develop programmes that are geared to performance-oriented objectives and goals.

Step 5: Monitor changes in customer behaviours

Customers will complain from time to time when services are poorly rendered; therefore institutions must take cognizance of the response from customers when rendering services.

Step 6: Improve customer satisfaction

Customizing and personalizing products and services is one mechanism to improve customer relationships. Use of information and communication technology to bring the services closer to the people through the mode of automation. The focus on e-Governance is of particular relevance to service delivery. Of particular importance are some of the recent developments for example, SARS e-Filing and Multi-Purpose Community Centres (MPCCs).

Step 7: Measure progress toward improvement

Performance improvement programmes must focus on a holistic

approach and be institution-wide. Improvements must be ongoing to ensure goal-oriented actions.

In essence, maintaining a value-based relationship with the customers whom we are called to serve is dependent on three critical factors, according to Andreassen (1994: 22). He claims that organizations are customer-oriented if they market differentiated products and services reflecting heterogeneous customer preferences. He maintains that organizations wanting to be customer-oriented must:

- understand their customers' needs and in which direction they are heading;
- turn this understanding into actions in all functions within the organization; and
- design and implement a marketing mix which effectively responds to their company's understanding of the customers' needs.

This approach leads to effecting continuous improvements in service delivery. The public sector thus focuses on service delivery improvement plans (SDIP) in an effort to ensure quality.

Service Delivery Improvement Plans: A Tool For CRM

According to the White paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997: 33-36), the following key aspects ought to be acted upon by public institutions:

- inform staff and encourage them to focus on improved service delivery;
- provide information to facilitate monitoring by the Public Service Commission, DPSA, Portfolio Committees, the national and provincial and inter-provincial transformation co-ordinating committee, and developmental transformation units; and
- make provision for the organisation's service standards and other service delivery goals and commitments.

Implementation of Service Delivery Improvement Plan

Improving service delivery must be seen as a continuous process so as to

improve targets. This is highlighted by the following guidelines for implementing a service delivery improvement programme (WPTPSD, 1997:25-28).

Identify the customer

- The starting point is to establish who the recipients of services are.

- There are a variety of customers, whose requirements do not necessarily coincide.

- On the one hand, there are recipients of service such as the public, external organizations, other departments and other components within the department.

- On the other hand, there are also indirect 'customers' whose needs must also be taken into account. Taxpayers, for example, are customers, because Batho Pele gives them a right to expect that services will be provided cost effectively.

Establish customer needs and priorities

- The customer's needs and priorities will be the starting point for the setting of standards.

- Since delivery on standards will involve decisions about resources, it is essential to have accurate information about what customers really want.

- This will require systematic, regular consultation, using objective methods, which ensure that the views of all customers, including potential customers, are represented.

- Methods used to obtain information can vary from written questions to interviews.

Establish the current service baseline

- Accurate information about the current level and quality of service is essential in order to decide where and how to make improvements.

- How long does the average customer in a public office have to wait before being attended to?

- How long does it take to reply to letters or telephone enquiries?

- How long does it take to process application, licences, permits, etc?

- Is information to customers provided in a language, which they can easily understand?

- What resources are consumed in delivering a particular service?

Identify the improvement gap

- Is there a gap between what customers want and the level and quality of service currently provided?

- Should such a gap exist, a service delivery improvement plan should be implemented.

- The improvement plan must be systematic and address prioritised needs.

Set service standards

- Service standards can be set and progressively raised for closing the gap. Standards are commitments to provide a specified level and quality of service to individual customers at any given point in time.

- Service standards must cover the customer's main requirements, e.g. accessibility of services, response times, turnabout times,

accuracy, courtesy, the provision of information, and dealing with complaints.

- Standards are different from targets, which express longer-term aims for the ultimate level and quality of service to be achieved.

Gear up for delivery

- Ensuring that service standards are met is not solely the responsibility of those directly involved in delivering the service, but depends on the whole organization being geared up to support the commitments that have been made.

- Monitoring and reporting systems will be needed which enable senior management to check on progress, and take remedial action where necessary.

- Management information systems will be required to provide data on the unit costs of key services.

- Human resource training, supervision and appraisal systems will need to be re-focused on service delivery.

- Senior management must ensure that human and financial resources are shifted from inefficient and unnecessary activities and used instead to ensure that delivery of service standards can be met.

Announce service standards

- When the foregoing steps have been taken, the organization will be ready to announce its service standards and launch its service delivery programme.

- There is no single right method for publishing standards: the key is that all customers and potential customers must know and understand which level and quality of service they can expect to receive, and what recourse they have if the standards are not met.

- The method or methods adopted must be tailored to the needs of different customers.

Monitor delivery against standards and publish the results

- The final step is to check whether services have met the standards that were set, to announce the results to customers, and to explain the reasons where the service has fallen short of what was promised.

- These results not only complete the accountability loop, but will provide valuable insights to guide further efforts to improve services in the future.

Some of the practical attempts by public institutions to ensure a culture of continuous improvement in CRM are through the following initiatives:

- encouraging customers to write to any one of the service centres;

- undertake to investigate and respond to complaints within two weeks of receipt;

- endeavour to apologise and take corrective measures;

- maintain a complaints registration and follow-up mechanism;

- undertake to treat any information on fraud and corruption seriously; and

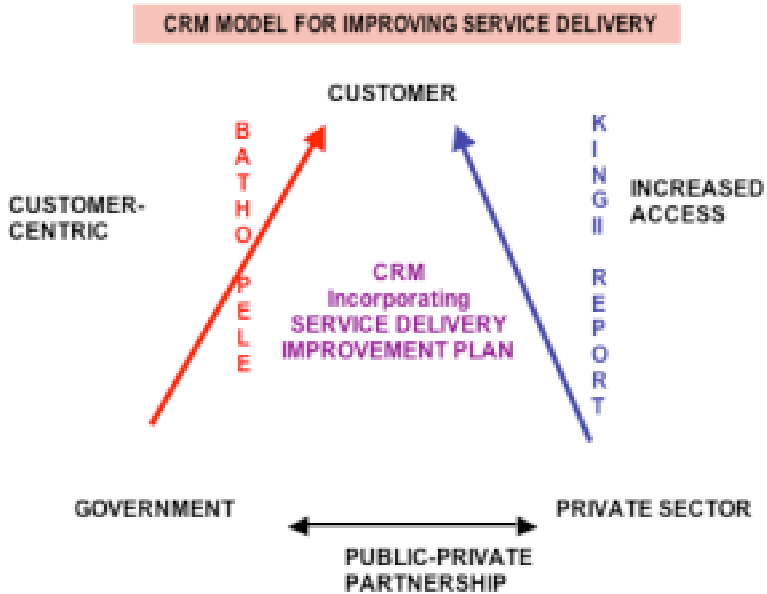- use the toll-free number to report fraud, corruption and mal-administration.

The outcome of these endeavours enhances customer satisfaction, promotes the image of public institutions and contributes to the efficacy of public service delivery.

Customer Relationship Model for Service Delivery Improvement

A model is presented to highlight the synergy between the service delivery agenda, the various stakeholders, embracing the notion of

Corporate Governance (Customer is 'King') and the significance of customer relationship management.

Model adapted from: Strickett (Feb 2005: 39)

CRM MODEL FOR IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY

CUSTOMER

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC

BATHO PELE

CRM
Incorporating
SERVICE DELIVERY
IMPROVEMENT PLAN

KING II REPORT

INCREASED ACCESS

GOVERNMENT

PRIVATE SECTOR

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

The Relationship Between Ethics and CRM

Government departments should display the level and quality of service standards which they intend providing for public perusal. The setting of service standards is an attempt at improving customer relationship management and ensuring that public institutions are serious about the quality of what is delivered to the customers. Individual spheres of government must also set their own and additional standards provided that they are not in conflict or exceed national goals. It is imperative that standards are measurable and specific so that customers will be able to experience for themselves whether they are receiving the services

promised. Service standards must be set at both a realistic and demanding level. Service standards must be approved by the appropriate body before execution thereof. Once approved, the service standards must be published and displayed at the point of delivery and communicated as widely as possible to all potential customers. This will enable all customers to be aware of what level of services they are entitled to and express dissatisfaction should they not receive it. Performance against results should be regularly measured and the results thereof must be made public.

> **Selflessness:** Public officials should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

> **Integrity:** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

> **Objectivity:** In carrying out their business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits, holders of public office should make their choices on merit.

> **Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

> **Openness:** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest demands it.

> **Honesty:** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

> **Leadership:** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

The Nolan Committee's Seven Principles of Public Life (Chapman 2000: 230-231).

A further point of integration of Batho Pele Principles and CRM is that of the ethical dimension. The importance of articulating ethics and values that define and underpin the public service cannot be ignored. Ethics and values are the normative guidelines for quality service delivery. It is critical to provide both public officials and the public with a common frame of reference regarding the principles and standards to be applied and in assisting public officials to develop an appreciation of ethical issues involved in effective and efficient public service delivery (Hondeghem 1998: 30).

Public institutions in managing their relationship with customers must take due cognisance of their ethical and moral responsibility, which is emphasised in Chapter 10 of the South African Constitution. Furthermore, this responsibility can be further enhanced by the Seven Principles of Public Life by the Nolan Committee in the United Kingdom. The principles set out the benefit of all who serve the public and should be viewed against the background of a distinction between what is and what ought to be, in other words, the difference between behaviouralism and normativism.

Knowledge-Enabled Customer Relationship Management

The intention of a knowledge-enabled approach is to integrate customer relationship management and knowledge management. To build good relationships with customers, it is necessary to serve customers in a preferred way, therefore requiring the management of 'customer knowledge' (Davenport *et al.* 2001 in Gebert *et al.* 2003: 107). A customer-oriented knowledge management focuses on the knowledge most valuable to the institution: customer knowledge. A knowledge-oriented customer relationship management on the other hand serves as a framework to manage quality relationships in a cost-effective way. CRM is seen as an interactive process to achieve satisfaction of customer needs whilst at the same time enhancing performance management.

Knowledge in customer-oriented processes entails the following:

- measuring inputs, service costs and outputs in terms of allocated budgets;

- acquiring and continuously updating knowledge on customer needs;

- applying customer knowledge to continuously improve performance through a process of learning from successes and failures;

- the implementation of appropriate systems to support customer knowledge acquisition, sharing and measurement of CRM effectiveness; and

- constantly contrasting the balance between service inputs and the changing needs of customer (Gebert *et al.* 2003: 108).

According to Gebert *et al.* (2003: 109), CRM therefore, is improved through acquisition of knowledge from the following three categories:

- knowledge for customers (satisfy customers' knowledge needs)

- knowledge about customers (understand customers' needs and motivations and address them)

- knowledge from customers (customers' knowledge about products and services – through interaction with customers, this knowledge can be gathered to sustain continuous improvement)

Another innovation in knowledge-based CRM is through technological means (ICT) to ensure maximum value to the customer. In the public sector, resource constraints (i.e. financial resources and tight budgets, increasing scrutiny and transparency of public programmes and growing case loads are putting today's social welfare services, for example, under enormous strain and pressure. Through technologically-driven approaches, solutions are developed to enable public departments to handle customer queries more efficiently, answer questions more quickly and resolve issues in just one call. Intelligent access to all interactions, whether they originate by phone, face-to-face, e-mail or on-line queries, more flexible information retrieval and a deeper understanding of customers' issues through automated workflow ensures that all case data is properly captured and routed to ensure that people are

not being 'lost in the system'. In the South African public sector, technology has undoubtedly brought the services closer to the people, and this technological innovation has contributed to improving customer relationship management. However, one must be guarded of not becoming virtual communities, but be conscious of managing these relationships with customers on an ongoing basis.

Implementation of CRM: A Case Study of New Zealand Local Government

An interesting case study of New Zealand's local government – Manukau, which is New Zealand's third largest city, is three years into an ambitious programme to reinvent citizen service delivery since March 2005. Customer service was seen as vitally important to Manukau Local Government and three years ago, they agreed to a new strategy of citizen, customer and community relationship managed by what was popularly called C3RM. This initiative was borne out of a consultative process of the three stakeholders. The attempt was not only to improve the quality of service delivery, but also to generate information about the nature of citizen-government interactions. One of the important values was the ability to record citizens' service and goods consumption and over time shape the provision of goods and services to better align to the needs of customers. Adopting a business-like approach to citizen service was not an entirely smooth transition because the concept of marketing was not clearly understood in the public sector. The council built its marketing efforts on data collection from customer transactions and it regularly used radio and newspaper advertising, online promotions as well as usual leaflets and brochures to build outreach to residents. Furthermore, they allowed the city authorities through technology, to integrate multiple views of the citizen into a single database, giving the council a consolidated memory of its transactions with the community for the first time. The fact that the customer is both a ratepayer, library user, water consumer and has received a parking ticket is all shown on one screen. When a survey was conducted, it revealed that 79% of the customers were satisfied with their interactions with the council and the service they received.

http://www.pstm.net/article/index.php?articleid=532

> Governments all over the world generally do not have an adequate understanding of services. They rarely actually speak to service beneficiaries about how services should be delivered despite the fact that providing a service or a range of services can be quite complex. Services must be the starting point for thinking about enhancing service delivery and improving customer relationships. Each service can have its set of legislation, administration and institutional dynamics (Patel 2005: 73).

We must always remind ourselves of the famous adage by Albert Einstein (in Ngema 2004: 64), 'one definition of insanity is to do the same things we have always done, but expect a different result'.

Conclusion

The development and management of customer relationships ought to be a central focus in service delivery reforms. CRM basically focuses on knowing your customers and their basic needs. Through the renewed focus on CRM, public sector reform initiatives can focus on delivering improved services by making customer information available so that in all interactions with the public, a value-based approach is maintained to ensure relationships are built and expectations are acceded to.

The public sector often inspires exasperation 'Not before your time!'; 'If ever', or even 'in your dreams!' How many times have we heard such laments? These are some of the general expressions of frustration that are usually heard in the public sector. 'Why can't they get their act together?' or 'Why do I keep getting shunted hither and thither?' or 'Just how many times do I have to repeat everything from scratch to yet another person?' Even more popular is 'Don't they ever communicate?' 'Does anyone really know what's going on?' http://www.consultants-guide.com/2002/february/ article7.asp

These are some of the generalisations of remarks that customers resort to when engaging with public institutions regarding a service or basic need. The emphasis ultimately of CRM in the public sector is to

enhance service delivery, exceed customer expectations, honour statutory obligations of societal needs and to promote the overall quality of life.

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