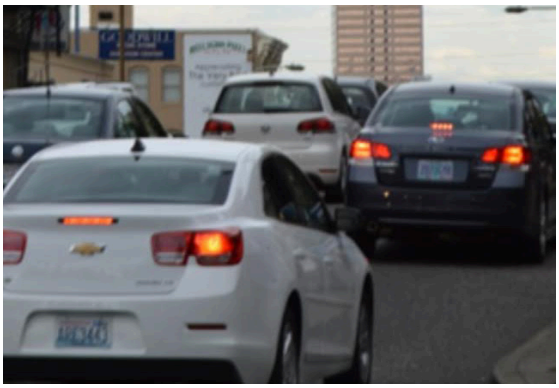
Creation of a Customer Relations Development System



The Ohio Department of Transportation wanted to explore the potential for a new system to receive and respond to customer feedback.

THE CHALLENGE

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) needed a comprehensive process or system to monitor customer feedback and satisfaction with its transportation system.

ODOT funded a research project to investigate the potential development of a system that would not only facilitate two-way communications with customers but would also assist in a new comprehensive process to receive and respond to customer feedback efficiently and accurately. ODOT hired AEM to lead this project.

PROJECT GOALS

To meet the goals of ODOT, AEM established the following technical objectives:

- Analyze ODOT's existing customer communication relations processes, portals, and tools
- Measure baseline customer satisfaction with existing customer feedback portals and responses
- Benchmark ODOT's customer relations processes/portals against practices at peer agencies
- Benchmark ODOT's customer relations processes/portals against the needs and desires of its customers
- Identify and assess available customer relations tools and services
- Conduct a gap analysis and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis
- Recommend alternative approaches to a customer relations development system

THE AEM APPROACH

AEM's Transportation Group conducted an assessment of the ODOT's customer relations communications processes and procedures. Our team of experienced transportation researchers employed a variety of approaches to gather information on ODOT's current, potential, and needed/desired performance regarding customer communications, relations, and service.

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Assessment of Existing Customer Relations Tools and Software
A variety of existing tools and software alternatives were reviewed and assessed for their potential application within ODOT.

Basic Practices Review
To present a framework for why customer communications, relations, and service are important and how other transportation agencies have addressed these issues, the practices of peer organizations with extensive customer satisfaction programs were assessed through a literature review.

Interviews with ODOT Staff
Interviews with ODOT staff were conducted to gain input and perspective on current customer communications processes, as well as the needs of ODOT staff.

ODOT Staff Focus Group
A focus group with ODOT staff was conducted as a follow up to the interviews. The focus group allowed for interaction and discussion between participants and a more indepth assessment of existing processes and ODOT needs.

ODOT Customer Survey
A web based survey was designed and administered to assess the needs, desires, and levels satisfaction of a limited number of customers who recently had contacted ODOT.

Analysis of ODOT Customer Communications Data
Actual customer feedback/communications data from ODOT's web feedback form, Customer Inquiry Management System (CIMS) database, Facebook pages, and Twitter feeds were analyzed to determine the types of customer communications, as well as the quantity and quality of data available.

GAP AND SWOT ANALYSES

Using the findings from these data gathering activities, AEM conducted a gap analysis and a SWOT analysis.

Gaps were addressed in three areas:

- Between ODOT's current performance and potential performance, should improvements be instituted
- Between current performance and the performance desired by customers
- Between potential performance and the performance desired by customers

The SWOT analysis assessed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with ODOT achieving its objective of improved two-way communications with customers.

The gaps, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were all assessed in four areas:

- Internal processes and communications
- Customer communications portals/tools
- Customer communications, information, and service
- Customer communications data

RESULTS

AEM's comprehensive final report describes in detail the research approaches used to meet the technical objectives of the project and provides in-depth discussions of the results of the gap and SWOT analyses.

The final project report can be accessed via the following link:

www.bit.ly/AEMODOT

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