

Measuring citizens' (dis)satisfaction

Nihilent Technologies, a global consulting and solutions integration company headquartered in Pune, has rich experience in IT outsourcing and IT services. It recently developed a Customer Loyalty Evaluation (CLE) framework, a patented predictive model that helps businesses identify the loyalty drivers and build customer loyalty. It then went ahead and conducted a citizen survey using CLE to determine citizens' 'loyalty' towards the government. The survey looked at people's expectations from the present and the future governments, the government's ability to deliver on the promises made, trust of people in the government and the comfort/convenience the citizen felt while availing the government services. B Ravi Teja, senior associate vice-president of Nihilent Technologies, spoke with **Geetanjali Minhas** about this innovative application. Here are the excerpts from the interview:

What is Nihilent Technologies all about?

Solving business problems and managing change is what Nihilent does. We help private companies and government agencies implement change. In India, Nihilent has worked for income tax and customs departments. In South Africa we have worked for the country's revenue services and turned around their sick national carrier and the broadcasting

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corporation.

Tell us about the Customer Loyalty Evaluation model you have developed and a survey you did using it.

While trying to understand customer behaviour and their buying needs we identified through research 14 signals that influence customers' buying decisions. There were eight value signals and six cost signals which include tangible monetary factors as well as intangible aspects such as emotional, psychological and ethical factors. We applied the same to government-to-citizen (G2C) services. When these signals can be applied across services and manufacturing industry, why can't they be applied to the government?

Thus you are equating the government with a service provider and citizens with consumers. That is interesting.

Yes, the government is a service provider. Like customers, citizens too have expectations and needs. When they vote, they are stimulated by the promises made by the political party which comes to power. But, after a few years, has the government delivered? We thought this framework can be applied to citizens and the government and that was the motivation behind the survey.

The government has to look at itself as a service provider and citizens as consumers. To identify citizens' needs and expectations and find out core problems they have to adopt a methodology. The government has to work out systems, policies, processes and services in alignment to the needs of citizens. The government has to find out what the citizens want and deliver the same so that they can come back to power in next elections by delivering what the citizens want.

What were the key findings in this survey?

As per the evaluation model, statistically, 'experience' divided by 'expectation' should be higher than 'expectation' and it should be greater than 1. The report identifies where the government is missing out. The loyalty index is less than 1 at just 0.62, which means citizens have not experienced what they expected. At a stimulation index of 2.87, the government (UPA)



had promised a lot during the election campaign but the experience with the government performance is only 1.19.

There has been a series of scams in recent months, leaving people angry. The anti-corruption movement has received massive support. Does your survey report capture this mood?

Our report came out last year, much before Anna Hazare's fast against corruption, and says that people are dissatisfied with (the government due to) corruption. A loyalty index of less than 1 (shows) people voted for a clean government and did not expect scams and corruption. It is a wake-up call for government to draft (a stringent) Lokpal bill and try something different if it wants another term. The report is clear in terms of where the problem lies: corruption, service delivery etc. This tool, probably for the first time, takes inputs from people affected; by asking how much they are affected and if they expected it. Like a mirror it shows problem areas to the government.

Your survey has been conducted in major metros and towns. Don't you think including small towns and rural areas would have given more comprehensive results?

It would have. If smaller towns and rural areas had been included, the loyalty index would have gone further down to 0.3-0.4. But our survey was not funded. We did the survey on our own strength, with the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) as partners. We are confident about the accuracy of results.

As per your survey, women have more expectations from the government than the men have. Why?

The lady of the house knows inflation best. It was a revelation for us too to know that women expect much more than men. This means, if the government wants to be re-elected it needs to understand the needs of the half of the country's population. Segregation by gender, income groups, status etc is important. Expectations of a retired person are different from those of a teenager. The report tells us clearly that expectations of women are different from those of men.

Did these expectations vary across demographics, age groups etc?

If the loyalty index is less than 1.5, that means people feel very disgusted especially with inflation and corruption. People had a lot of expectations from the government and they have

been let down.

Many previous governments too have faced allegations of corruption, but why does the impact appear so high this time?

Unlike before, now with the right to information (RTI) and an active media, everything is in public domain. With the Lokpal bill, it (corruption) will be exposed as well as tried. The survey says that corruption and scams are an issue. The electorate expected the government to improve the country's brand image, but it has deteriorated instead.

How can the survey findings help the government?

I don't think the government requires a survey to know that they are not delivering. The survey validates scientifically and statistically problems faced by every demographic profile of country, i.e., inflation, scams, prices, rudeness in service delivery etc.

Your survey also reveals that people are not happy with the way government employees interact with them.

The feedback says government employees are rude. Walk into a government department and they will not even acknowledge you. Help desks are not manned. Whether it is obtaining birth certificates, tax submission or any other service; they don't believe that the customer wants to be served. If people are ready to pay for less turnaround, systems should treat them differently. It will also add to the exchequer. People must be treated nicely.

What about the online service delivery and e-governance?

Online services have reduced the timeline of services from one day to one minute. These things will help the country. There are many improvements required.

Who all can use the CLE model?

Who cannot! Wherever there is a consumer or services provided, the model is applicable. We have also created a version of the customer loyalty index called Relationship Harmony Index for 'expectation' and 'experience' between spouses! It's an iPad application available online. ■

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