



CUSTOMER

City of York Council

SECTOR

Information systems

Customer Flow Management

—
Customer
service one
stop shop

LBFoster®



Creating a customer service one stop shop

The City of York Council is a unitary local authority providing services to a population of approximately 200,000 people, covering an area of 105 square miles. In March 2013, the City of York Council opened a new service centre following a major transformation of the award winning Grade II listed original York railway station.

The new Customer Service centre is the focal point of the building, replacing the original thirteen receptions across the region, and bringing them all together in one convenient location in the heart of the city.

Requirement

The new centre prompted an overhaul in the way face to face services were managed and delivered by the City of York Council management team. A complex project brought together all the services at various locations. The objective was to create a friendly, professional and efficient environment to deliver seamless access to all council services. The centre needed to mirror the commitments outlined in the City of York customer strategy, to be accessible for all and create an open and transparent ambience. It was essential that the diverse needs of the public were addressed and catered for. The centre needed to provide for

Approach

City of York Council invited partners to tender for the implementation of a customer flow management system to bring together services across all categories and efficiently organise the flow of people into the centre. The key requirement was for the system to be able to arrange appointments, book customers in and direct them to the next available trained customer services representative. This could be at an advisory desk, customer meeting room or even supporting the customer to access self service points. The system would need a solution to record meetings that took place, book meeting rooms for Council staff and link with other key Council systems. It would

Implementation

In November 2012, Netpractise Ltd were awarded the five year contract to implement a modern customer services customer flow management and appointment system at the new site and provide ongoing technical support and upgrades. Netpractise set up a workshop meeting with all of the key stakeholders to understand their specific requirements. The complicated project integrated several service points and appointments and required some specific software development to be undertaken by the Netpractise in-house team. After software implementation and system testing, the Netpractise engineering team installed the equipment on site in February 2013.

Inside the City of York Council Customer Service Centre, there are a number of waiting areas and two separate areas to serve the specific needs of customers visiting the site who may be experiencing difficulties and are very vulnerable. Across the centre, the Netpractise team installed 10 visual display

a weekly footfall of 2,500 people visiting for pre-arranged one to one appointments, group meetings and ad hoc visits for information or face to face interactions. The City of York Council wanted to ensure that members of the public were steered towards skilled representatives at a desk or in a meeting room appropriate for the specific service. The overall objective for City of York Council was to deliver on their Customer Strategy aim of "delivering the right service, at the right time, in the right way, at the right cost for our customer."

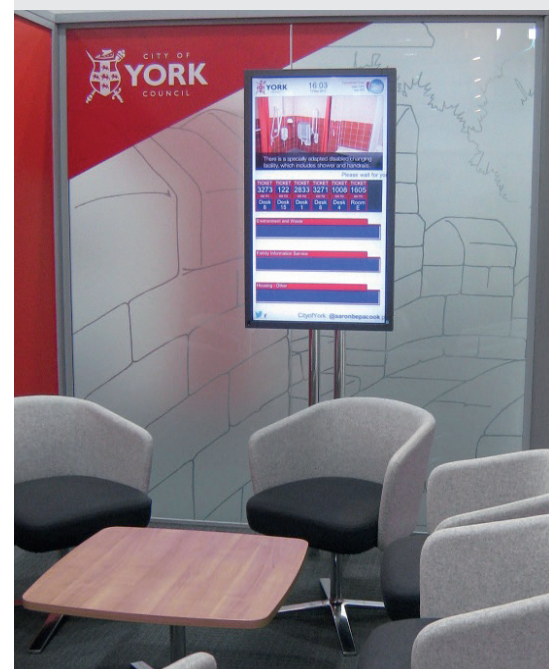
also assist with the management of customer waiting times, transaction handling times and provide robust reporting to aid service improvements and resources management. As the system was required to cope with up to 100 attendees during the busiest hour, it needed to be robust and trustworthy as any failure would cause difficult and stressful conditions for City of York Council employees, customers and partner organisations. The technical integration required it to interact with Microsoft Exchange 2010 for room, space and resource bookings, and Lagan V8 for all customer interactions.

screens, media players with Netpractise's latest Digital Pro Media technology, an amplifier and speakers. In the reception area, two freestanding kiosks were installed, including one half height kiosk to ensure that our self service was accessible for all our visitors. The solution also required two Custom Q3 ticket printers. The hardware installed by Netpractise was chosen specifically for each project and selected for its high quality, energy efficiency and durability to reduce the overall lifecycle cost of the solution.

Following the implementation of the equipment and system testing, Netpractise conducted a series of in-depth 'Train the Trainer' sessions to ensure that all those involved with accessing the system were completely confident from the launch. Attendees at the session were provided with all the training needed to bring the 102 system administrative users up to speed before the 'go live' date.

"I have found the Netpractise Customer Flow Management System to be an excellent system. It is simple to train users on, its easy to use and the reporting and admin tool is very straightforward. All in all, a great system"

Barry Clow
Learning & Development Coordinator
City of York Council



Results

The Netpractise system enables customers and business visitors to arrange appointments via the internet or over the phone. They are then able to cancel or amend their appointment if required. When arriving at the Customer Service Centre they can either book in via the self service kiosks or they can be assisted by customer services representatives at one of the two help desks. Once registered, they are directed to the appropriate waiting area. These same customer contact points also serve customers and business visitors who drop in and select a service. City of York customers are issued with a numbered printed ticket and directed to the appropriate waiting area. If other partners prefer not to use the ticket system and for their customers, the kiosks will simply direct them to the appropriate waiting area. The Custom Q3 ticket solution prints on standard size ticket paper stock, thus reducing the cost of replenishment compared with other Queue Management Systems.

All screens around the centre show the ticket queuing information together with additional relevant Council multi-media messages and its outgoing Twitter feed. The customers' number appears on the screen to show when they can expect to be seen. The ongoing media on the screen provides interesting content to watch whilst waiting to be seen, which can often reduce the perceived time it takes to be served. This function also allows

the City of York Council to communicate up to the minute information which is timely and relevant to the audience. Customer ticket numbers are called both visually via a number of screens and via audio message.

Aside from the customer facing benefits of the system, the major asset of this solution is the accurate and timely information it can provide to aid management decision making. The reporting mechanism can instantly show the quantity, duration and type of face to face client queries each day completely eliminating the need for time consuming manual collection of enquiry data. It can also accurately report the waiting times for face to face customer enquiries across the service and provide data that will help organisations within the City of York centre, to understand information about footfall without ticketing. The Netpractise solution provides over forty standard reports and enables York staff to write additional reports as required. This allows the team at City of York Council Customer Services to use the information to support internal reporting and resourcing decisions in a timely manner. Stephen Langston, Resources & Performance Analyst at City of York Council, comments "A friendly looking easy to use system for reporting data. The queue management reporting suite gives you easy access to all the information needed."



"I have found Netpractise to be knowledgeable, supportive but most of all patient with a technophobe like me, in delivering the system into our new customer centre."

Lorraine Lunt
Customer Service Support Manager
City of York Council

Summary

Delivered as a complete end to end solution by Netpractise the new appointments and queue management system at City of York Council has met the original objective of providing a high quality, seamless customer experience in the most cost effective way. This major development project has demonstrated the robust, flexible nature of the Netpractise solution which was delivered within budget and in good time for the highly visible opening of the West Offices earlier this year. Lorraine Lunt, Customer Services Support Manager at City of York Council concluded "I have found Netpractise to be knowledgeable, supportive but most of all patient with a technophobe like me, in delivering the system into our new customer centre."