

CAPITA

The Swindon Capita Partnership: Working together to put the customer at the heart of service delivery



"Right from the outset, we made it clear to potential bidders that we wanted a strategic partner and not a contractor. I am delighted that we have achieved exactly that and I am confident that our impressive transformation will gather even more momentum."
– Gavin Jones, Chief Executive of Swindon Borough Council

Overview

■ The challenge

To rapidly transform Swindon Borough Council's customer experience in an aggressive timeframe to support the Council's vision to provide efficient, cost-effective and accessible customer-focused services.

■ The solution

Through the strategic 15-year Swindon Capita Partnership, Capita and Swindon Borough Council are delivering 'Swindon Direct': an innovative customer service delivery framework to transform the Council's customer experience.

■ The benefits

The Swindon Capita Partnership has given Swindon Borough Council the long-term commitment of Capita, a proven transformation partner. Together, they have transformed the customer experience by improving service accessibility, efficiency and cohesiveness, and ensuring consistently high levels of service from a multi-skilled team.

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A customer-centric Council

Swindon Borough Council has a vision to be a top-rated customer-centric council. The Council's aim is to provide effective customer-focused services that represent value for money, are easily accessible by all and can resolve 80 percent of customer enquiries at the first point of contact.

The Council needed to transform its customer service function to put the customer right at the heart of service delivery. This called for a complete overhaul of the Council's existing operations – the people, locations, business processes and underlying technology – to support a more customer-focused service. The Council recognised that to turn this vision into a reality, it would need to engage a partner with the expertise to challenge and improve its current business.

The Swindon Capita Partnership

In 2007, Capita Group Plc entered into the Swindon Capita Partnership: a 15-year strategic partnership agreement with Swindon Borough Council valued at £242million and involving the transfer of nearly 400 Council staff.

The Swindon Capita Partnership is transforming the customer experience of dealing with the council by delivering improved customer services for the local community, supported by a transformed administration service and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) that is fit for purpose. The partnership is also transforming the way the council works by improving the internal support services it now runs such as financial administration; Human Resources (HR) and payroll; technical design; facilities management and Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

The programme to transform the Council's customer services, and put in place the business processes and technology to support delivery spans just 15 months of the long-term partnership. This extremely aggressive timescale was set by the Council in line with 'Swindon 2010', a definitive set of 50 promises that the Council has pledged to fulfil by the year 2010.

A strategic partner – not a contractor

During the 15-year partnership, Capita will be providing high-quality, value-for-money services to the local community on behalf of the Council. Pre-agreed key performance indicators and project milestones will maintain the momentum of the transformation project.

However, this is where the similarities with a traditional outsourcing agreement end; from the start, Swindon Borough Council made it clear that it wanted a true strategic partner – not a contractor – to achieve its transformation. The vision is to work together, sharing the responsibilities and successes, the risks and the reward of partnership working. Challenging the traditional 'us' and 'them' contractor/client relationship. Capita and Swindon Borough Council both believe that such long-term, partnership-based relationships allow ongoing service improvements and enhancements to be achieved.

Swindon Direct

To transform the Council's customer service function and business support services, Capita and Swindon Borough Council worked together to create Swindon Direct: an innovative frontline service delivery framework that is changing the way the customer does business with the Council and links frontline customer services with admin services and the council's own service delivery teams.

The Swindon Direct framework presents a single view of the Council to the customer, guaranteeing a consistent customer experience.

The solution is designed to help the council to improve how customers access services, increase overall satisfaction levels and deliver a more effective service to the customer by having the staff and technology as close to the first point of contact as possible so they can complete a transaction without reference to the service delivery team.

This model will apply whether people choose to contact the council through the web, by phone, face to face or by writing to us. This means service teams can focus on delivering quality frontline services to residents with minimum interruption.

This service model establishes a one stop shop, a contact centre and a centralised business support unit and links them to service delivery teams through technology. The centralised business support unit also provides admin support to both customer services and service delivery teams.



Enabling the transformation

The Swindon Direct service delivery framework called for a complex technological transformation of the Council's existing operations. To minimise risk and disruption to the existing level of customer service, the Swindon Capita Partnership team opted for a phased implementation. Phase one aims to:

1. Increase the accessibility of customer services by providing a one stop shop and a new contact centre, linked to a centralised business support unit.
2. Improve customer service cohesiveness, accuracy and speed of delivery by streamlining and integrating the Council's business processes and systems.
3. Establish a cross-skilled team to deliver a seamless service to customers with requests that span multiple service areas.

Increasing customer service accessibility

Some of the most noticeable benefits that residents and businesses will see are through the refurbishment of the Council's existing one stop shop and the development of a new contact centre which now provide the first points of contact for many of the Council's high profile services.

The substantial renovation of the Council's existing one stop shop began just four days after the partnership agreement was signed. Building work was planned in three phases to ensure customer service was maintained throughout the renovation. Within 16 weeks, the new facility was complete, including a children's play area, 30 service desks, two 'quick service' points, a 'Q-Matic' ticket-queuing system, self-service Internet points, disability access and a community meeting room, providing Council facilities that are accessible to all.

Two days later, building work began on a new contact centre – this is a brand-new 34-seat, facility featuring a bespoke training room and staff rest areas. Finally, the team refurbished the ground floor of an existing Council building to create a centralised business support unit providing the foundation for the Council's access channels. Capable of completing most document-based customer requests, the support unit helps to free up staff to concentrate on improving service delivery.

Improving service cohesiveness

Swindon Borough Council's staff had been operating in discrete service areas, resulting in duplication of tasks and poor information sharing. To ensure the customer receives efficient, consistent and cohesive services, a business process re-engineering (BPR) team worked to streamline and integrate 120 processes across 12 service areas.

The business processes were built into a Customer Relationship management (CRM) solution designed to log, monitor and share the Council's customer information to provide the council with a single view of the customer and enable the customer to find out how their enquiry is progressing. The CRM solution integrates with a new Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephony system, ensuring that all call handlers have either the information or a customer's details and service history to resolve the majority of enquiries at the first point of contact.

"The one stop shop went live without a glitch on 4 June, one of the busiest days of the month for the walk-in centre, and the contact centre went live on 13 August. What was achieved in the timescales was nothing short of a miracle."
 – Suzanne Avent, Head of Customer Services for Swindon Direct

"It is through long-term partnership-based relationships like ours with Swindon Borough Council that continuing service improvement and enhancement can be achieved. We look forward to delivering service and value to the Council and its communities across this 15-year partnership."
– Simon Pilling, Joint Chief Operating Officer, Capita

Delivering seamless customer services

True customer service transformation relies on a strong, multi-skilled team to support that change. Therefore, training forms an integral part of the Swindon Capita Partnership transformation programme. Using a variety of training approaches and activities, including e-learning, classroom-based tuition, and coaching and mentoring, the partnership is delivering an ongoing training programme to ensure that all staff members are equipped with the customer service skills, system and service knowledge needed to deliver the transformed services.

The partnership created 'Super users' – service area experts responsible for both building their service knowledge into the systems and helping to cascade that knowledge through the business with the support of the professional training team. Meanwhile, the training team ensured staff in the one stop shop and contact centre were cross-trained to respond seamlessly to customer requests spanning multiple service areas.

A true strategic partnership

The Swindon Capita Partnership provides a blueprint for the Capita partnership model. A true strategic transformation partner, Capita shares the risks and responsibilities, and is committed to building a future that is rewarding for all parties. Swindon Direct represents the tangible result of this successful collaboration: a service delivery framework that has transformed the customer experience by putting the customer right at the heart of the Council's operations.

"Swindon Direct has revolutionised the way customer service is delivered. It is a model that we can be proud of today and build on for the future."
– Joy Price, Strategic Partnership Director

The speed and complexity of the project is unprecedented in local government. From a standing start, the first services went live in the new one stop shop and contact centre within six months in what has been described as the calmest, yet fastest and most complex 'go live week' on record. Disruption to customer service has been minimised and just four months after 'go live' customer services logged their 125,000th customer interaction.

The Swindon Capita Partnership represents a genuine win-win solution both for Swindon Borough Council and for its customers. Through the partnership, the Council can benefit from:

- The support of an experienced transformation partner with the expertise and resources to help turn its customer-centric council vision into a reality.
- Assurance that the transformation programme's aggressive timescales will be met through key performance indicators and pre-agreed project milestones.
- Continuous step changes in service improvements and enhancements, delivered in a managed and measurable way through a long-term, partner-based relationship.

Through the Swindon Direct delivery framework, the Council's customers are benefiting from:

- Increased service accessibility delivered via a modern, one stop shop and a new contact centre, backed by a centralised business support unit.
- Faster and more cohesive services achieved by integrating business processes and systems to support enquiry resolution at the first point of contact.
- A consistently high level of service supported by fully trained teams.

Structured for future success

The Swindon Capita Partnership will be working with the council in a further eleven service areas in 2008 to maximize opportunities to benefit from the one stop shop, contact centre and business support unit.. With the technology and processes firmly in place to support the new ways of working, the Council's customer focus looks set to intensify.

For more information

To find out more about Capita, please visit www.capita.co.uk

For further information on Swindon Borough Council, please visit: www.swindon.gov.uk

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