

10. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND FORWARD PATH

The Region of Peel's client base

The Region of Peel's clients include all its citizens, but as a service provider, Peel deals more intensively with those citizens who receive health and human services than with the population at large. An initial priority of this project was to develop a research method that enables Peel to look at its client base from both these perspectives – the one million individuals who live in Peel and the smaller proportion who receive health and human services at any point in time.

The solution was to design two overlapping but not identical surveys, one distributed to a random selection of the population and the other to clients of the Health and Human Services divisions.

Client Satisfaction Index

In order to track the Region's overall performance in delivering a services, a Client Satisfaction Index (CSI) was defined. This incorporates satisfaction ratings of 25 different services. Each service contributes to the index in proportion to its budget. The index now stands at 7.5 out of 10.

Drivers of satisfaction

The survey is based on a composite sample of clients from the three divisions, ETPS, Health and Human Services. These groups are combined in a rational manner, i.e. in proportion to budget. The sample represents the individuals that Peel employees deal with on a daily basis.

This approach derives from the Common Purpose Strategy, but it is important to test that it is valid. Can a single approach to service delivery meet the needs of such a diverse clientele?

The analysis of drivers of satisfaction shows that it can. There are five critical elements or “drivers” that create satisfaction with service delivery across the spectrum of clients. The are:

- Outcome: getting what you need
- Staff who make an extra effort to give clients what they need
- Timely service
- Knowing what to do when you encounter a problem
- Procedures and forms that are clear and easy to follow.

These drivers are general principles that will be effective in guiding service improvement efforts for all services. The fine detail of how they are put into practice may differ from service to service, and some direction on this is found in the divisional reports.

Awareness of Peel and its services

The information at hand shows no meaningful link between clients' level of awareness of Peel services and either satisfaction with services or confidence in the Region. This should not be taken as a final verdict on the matter, as the measures of awareness in the survey were not strong or comprehensive.

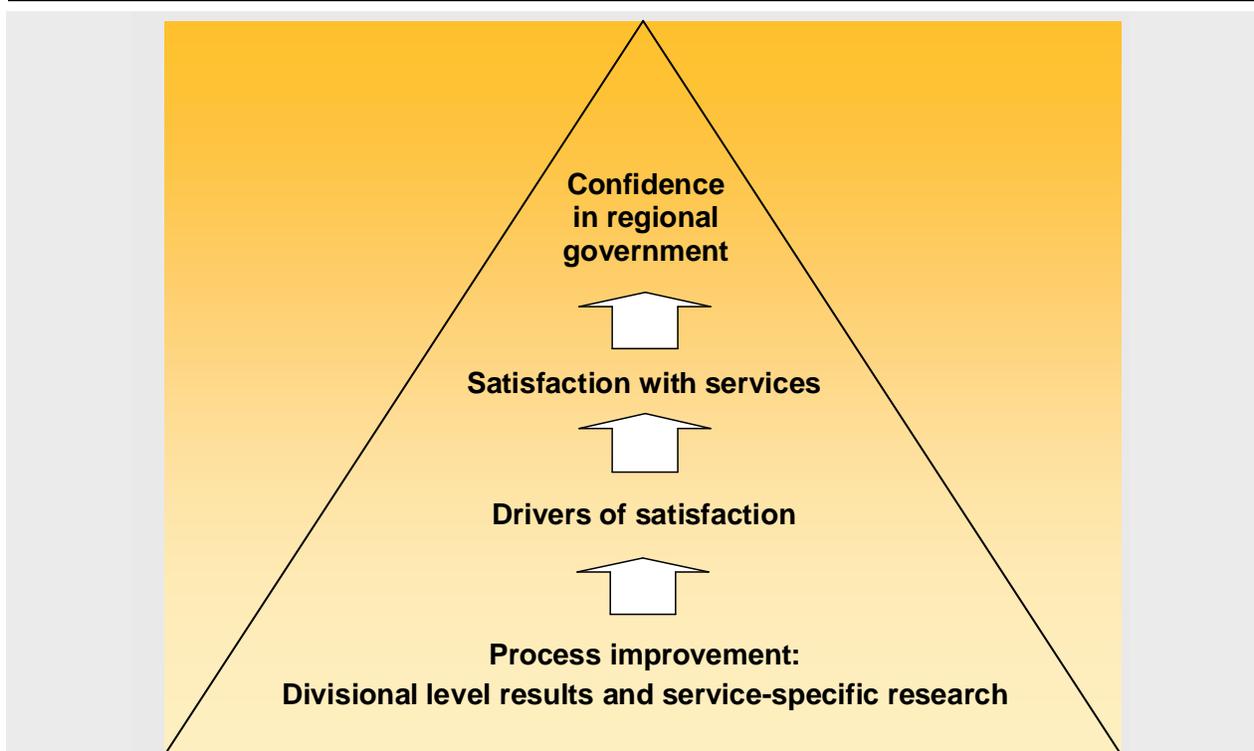
In fact, it is difficult to assess awareness in a telephone survey. It must be done at the very outset of the survey since, by the end, the interviewer has described most of the services that Peel provides, thereby raising the client's level of awareness considerably. Beginning a survey by quizzing the respondent is awkward. It is transparently a test, and citizens who have, often hesitantly, agreed to participate in the survey are put off by this approach.

In addition, the overall length of the survey meant that relatively little time could be devoted to the awareness issue. Thus, while a link between awareness and satisfaction has not been demonstrated, it has certainly not been ruled out. It would take a different piece of research, more focused on this issue, to give firm evidence one way or the other.

Looking forward

The thrust of the Common Purpose Strategy is strongly supported by these client survey results. As illustrated in Figure 25, confidence in government rests (at least in part) on satisfaction with the services that government provides. The drivers of satisfaction point the way to providing higher levels of client satisfaction.

Figure 25. Elements of the Common Purpose Strategy



Looking forward, each program area can examine its business processes to ensure that they align with the drivers of satisfaction, thereby contributing to the cycle of increased client satisfaction and confidence in regional government.

Peel currently delivers a high level of service. More than three-quarters of customers rated their recent experience at 4 or 5 out of 5. This research attempted to identify “pockets” of dissatisfied clients on the basis of demographic characteristics and in specific service areas and in other ways. No such pockets were found (with the understandable exception of those on waiting lists for housing and childcare).

Peel’s best strategy for improving client satisfaction is to focus on the drivers and provide consistently high levels of service to all. The most critical elements are outcome (and as a public sector organization, Peel cannot always give clients what they want) and attentive staff who take the time to understand client needs and make a real effort to assist.

Trust and confidence in government

Confidence in government underlies the democratic process and contributes to order and harmony in society. One of the reasons that governments strive to improve the quality of service delivery is that it leads to greater trust and confidence in public sector organizations.

The present survey results confirm a solid link between quality of service delivery and trust and confidence in government in the Region of Peel.

APPENDIX: EXPLAINING VARIANCE

The 5 bars in the chart to the right show how people differ in satisfaction with some service. These differences can be represented mathematically, and the statistical term that describes the differences is variance. Variance is a measure of how people differ in their response.

Peel’s client research seeks to understand why people differ – in mathematical terms it seeks to *explain* the variance in response. For example, suppose that all respondents aged 18-24 answered “very dissatisfied” (1 out of 5) to this question, while very person aged 25-34 answered 2 out of 5, and so on. Age would then account for 100 percent of the variance in response to this question – if you knew the respondent’s age you would know exactly their position on the statement.



The opposite possibility is that age is completely unrelated to satisfaction. In this case, there would be the same proportion of 18-24 year olds (and each other age group) at each level of satisfaction. Knowing a person’s age would give no hint as to whether they were satisfied with the service or not.

In practical terms, explaining 50 percent or more of the variance in some area means that one has a very good understanding of the situation. Research never explains 100 percent of the variance because people respond differently to events – timely service may be the most critical determinant of satisfaction for one person while getting help from staff may be for another.

Research that explains 20 or 30 percent of the variance in a situation is less compelling but may also be useful. Research that explains less than 10 percent is not, at least in the sphere of service delivery.