SYDNEY WATER'S CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE DESIGN PROGRAM

TRANSFORMING INTO A CUSTOMER-CENTRIC ORGANISATION

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ABSTRACT

Sydney Water initiated an enterprise-wide Customer Experience (Cx) Design program in January 2015. The key objective of the program was to provide the organisation with a truly 'outside-in' picture of what customer needs and pain-points were.

To achieve this, Sydney Water adopted a Human-Centred Design/Design Thinking approach, a research and design technique used by leading organisations globally to build customer empathy and design products and services that meet customer expectations. An extensive customer research program was carried out, using an array of design research methods such as online surveys, phone interviews, listening to customer phone calls at the contact centre, as well as observational studies in the customer's environment.

This information was used to construct an end-to-end view of a customer's journey through a Customer Journey Map, to help us better understand their current experience and expectations, and to design the future experience in a way that delivered greater value.

This research generated deep insights that told us not only what customers' problems were, but also how they felt when interacting with Sydney Water. The insights gained from this project now form a critical part in designing the future experience for Sydney Water customers.

INTRODUCTION

To inform and support Sydney Water's transformation to a customer-centric organisation, a Customer Experience (Cx) Design program of work was initiated. The first phase of the program has recently been completed and the key results are presented in this paper.

The program objective was to:

- Provide an 'outside-in' view of the business (Manning and Bodine, 2012) by 'walking in the customer's shoes' to identify customer needs at different times and life events;

- Identify the different touch-points through which customers interact with Sydney Water to fulfil their needs;

- Identify and define the experience for Sydney Water customers at each of these touch-points;

- Develop what an ideal customer experience would look like, supported by a roadmap of initiatives to achieve this ideal state.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROGRAM

- An end-to-end view of the 'Customer Journey' by mapping the key touch-points was developed;

- Key customer needs, pain-points and opportunities to transform their experience were identified;

- A framework to enable customer-centric decision-making was developed;

- A 'Customer Experience Pyramid' was developed to understand different levels of expectations;

- An 'Ideal State' for the customer experience was proposed;

- A systematic approach to transform customer experience was developed.

METHODOLOGY PROCESS

The project employed Human-Centred Design/Design Thinking techniques to achieve the objectives (Figure 1).

The focus on human-centred design using a number of different customer research techniques helped build empathy with Sydney Water customers who use Sydney Water's products and services. The research didn't just tell us what the problems were, but more importantly why customers felt the way they did. The project is being delivered in a staged approach so that Sydney Water can both process and implement the changes effectively.

Phase 1 delivered a high-level and enterprise-wide view of customers' interactions with Sydney Water through a journey map across six key experiences or 'journey phases'. The subsequent phases involve a deeper analysis of each journey phase supported by a transformation roadmap that will help Sydney Water transform its customers' experience for the journey phases.

Each of the 'deep-dives' is providing Sydney Water with the detail on not only how to improve the customer experience, but also what internal capabilities are needed to deliver sustainable change for customers.

To ensure Phase 1 delivered expected outcomes it was important to get inputs from the Executive, gain an understanding of the Corporate Strategy and leverage existing customer research assets.

Interviews with key stakeholders were conducted to achieve this.

Empathy

This stage involved understanding customers, their needs, their pain-points and current experiences with Sydney Water.

To be truly customer-centric, an 'outside-in' view using leading edge techniques in human-centred design was adopted. This involved a variety of research methods including:

- Leveraging existing research: Reviewing the knowledge base built through years of research to generate insights to develop some initial understanding of customer needs and wants.

- Online surveys were carried out with customers who had interacted with Sydney Water in the last six months and through banner ads on the Sydney Water website asking customers to provide feedback. This helped us further enhance our understanding around customer wants and needs.

- Phone interviews were conducted using targeted results gained from the online surveys. This allowed us to review customer feedback in greater detail over a phone call.

- Customer phone jacking at the contact centre: This involved listening to customers' calls to understand first-hand not only what were the issues that customers were facing, but also to look for the emotional cues in their stories.

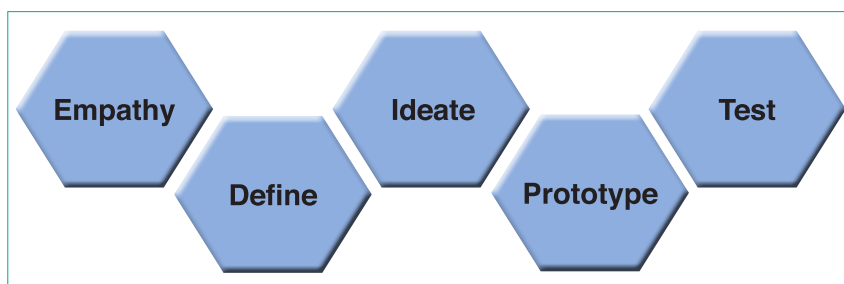- Immersion: Researchers spent time experiencing Sydney Water

Figure 1. Design Thinking approach.

services as a customer would. This enabled them to understand the issues, needs and wants from a customer's perspective as they 'walked in the customer's shoes'.

- Stakeholder and staff interviews: In addition to the customer research conducted there were also stakeholder and staff interviews. These involved meeting with subject matter experts and thought leaders to get their perspective on Sydney Water customer expectations.

These different views provided Sydney Water with an in-depth understanding of the customer needs, but also helped Sydney Water understand what is important to customers and how they felt about their experience when dealing with us.

Define

This stage defined the problem or opportunity by generating insights from the rich information gathered as a result of customer research.

The objective of this stage was to synthesise all of the information and share customers' real concerns, issues, needs and emotional drivers.

This was done in the form of a Customer Journey Map (Figure 2), Customer Experience Pyramid (Figure 3) and Customer Service Principles (Figure 4).

Customer Journey Map

The Customer Journey Map provided a vivid and visual map of how customers experience the Sydney Water service across time.

It involved detailing the respective journey touch-points and level of friction across customers' experience

on a daily basis. It also highlighted key insights, emotions and ideas/opportunities for implementation across the various touch-points of a customer's journey. The Customer Journey Map identified six key journey phases in their interaction with Sydney Water. These were:

- **Awareness and perception:** Looking for information and interacting with Sydney Water.

- **Engage:** Experiencing Sydney Water for the first time as a new account holder.

- **Use and expand:** Experiencing Sydney Water products and services.

- **Billing and payment:** Receiving a bill and making payments.

- **Troubleshooting:** Experiencing water faults and outages.

- **Develop/extend:** Involvement with property development and extension.

The Customer Journey Map provided an end-to-end view of how customers interact with Sydney Water. It also enabled staff to see from a customer's perspective how the services connect to one another and how they can contribute to a great customer experience.

Customer Experience Pyramid

The Customer Experience Design Project identified the three key elements of a great customer experience, as shown in Figure 3.

In many areas of the business Sydney Water delivers exceptional service at the 'Meet My Needs' end, having traditionally employed a highly operational focus.
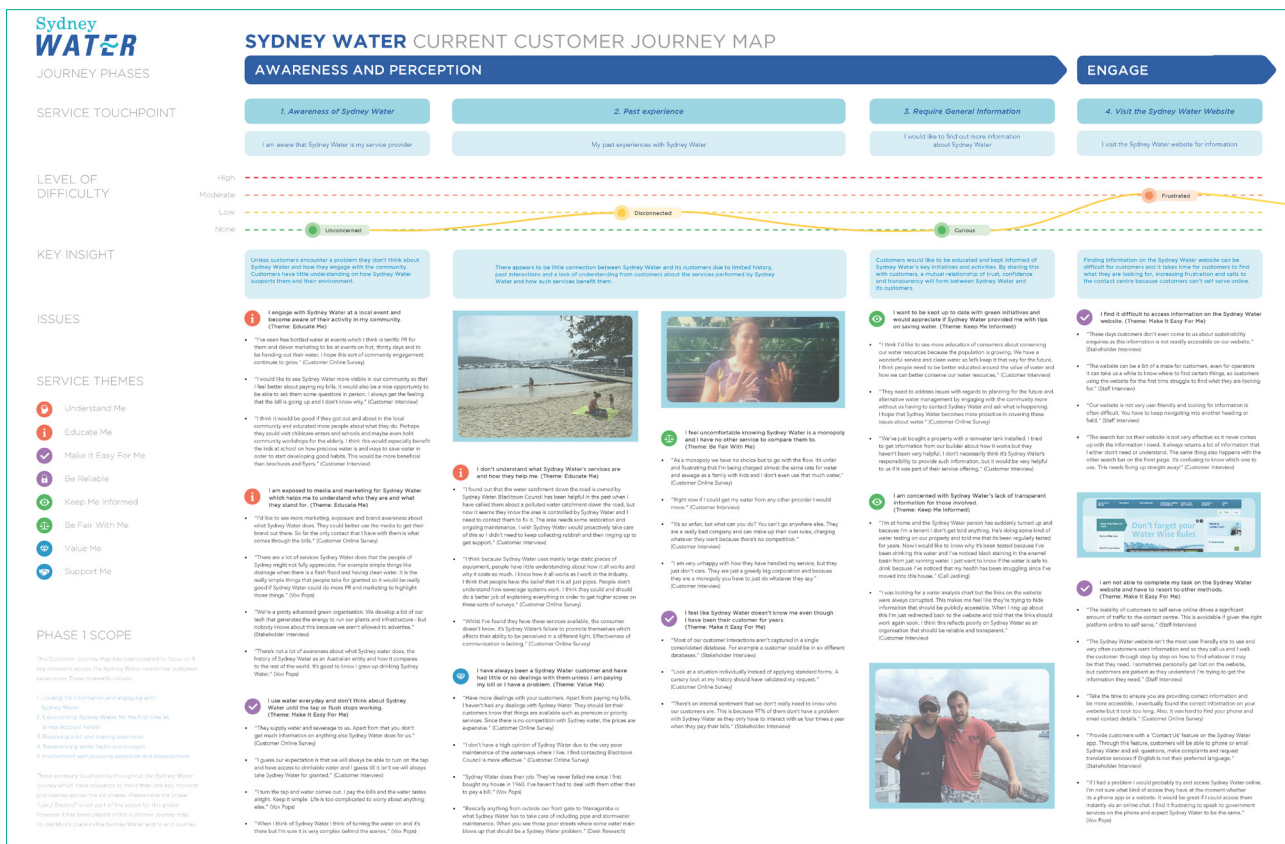
Figure 2. The Customer Journey Map.

With a move to a more customer-centric culture, increasing our focus on 'Make it Easy' and 'Make My Life Better' for customers presents an opportunity for Sydney Water to really enhance customers' experiences when they interact with us.

Meet My Needs: These are essential services Sydney Water provides, and Sydney Water is very good at delivering as per customer expectations. Customers expect that their needs are met as a minimum before Sydney Water tries to make it easy or make their lives better.

Make it Easy: This is about making the interactions customers have with Sydney Water easy. Low effort is expected from customers when they interact with us, whether it's billing or keeping them informed about outages.

Make My Life Better: These cater to the higher order needs of the customer. Customers expect the decisions of the future to include inputs from them, so that Sydney Water understands their community needs and also provides them with a world-class city in which to live.

Customer Service Principles

Through the detailed research, eight Customer Service Principles were identified. They provided a framework on what's important to customers when they experience our services. The customer service principles consisted of four key themes:

1. What customers need

- **Understand me:** Put ourselves in the customer's shoes to appreciate what they really need and what is important to them. Recognise how their lifestyle is impacted by our services and provide them with experiences that match their particular needs and wants.

Figure 3. Customer Experience Pyramid.

- **Educate me:** Provide customers with guidance, clear direction and easy access to relevant information that clarifies what they need to do and lets them know the value we offer throughout their journey.

2. What the services must offer

- **Make it easy for me:** Keep it simple and give customers more control over how and when they access information and seek support from us. Give the customers more options to help themselves by being transparent and communicating with them in plain language.

- **Be reliable:** Provide customers with continuity of good-quality water services that they can depend on and consistently demonstrate that their needs are important to us and are being considered at each step.
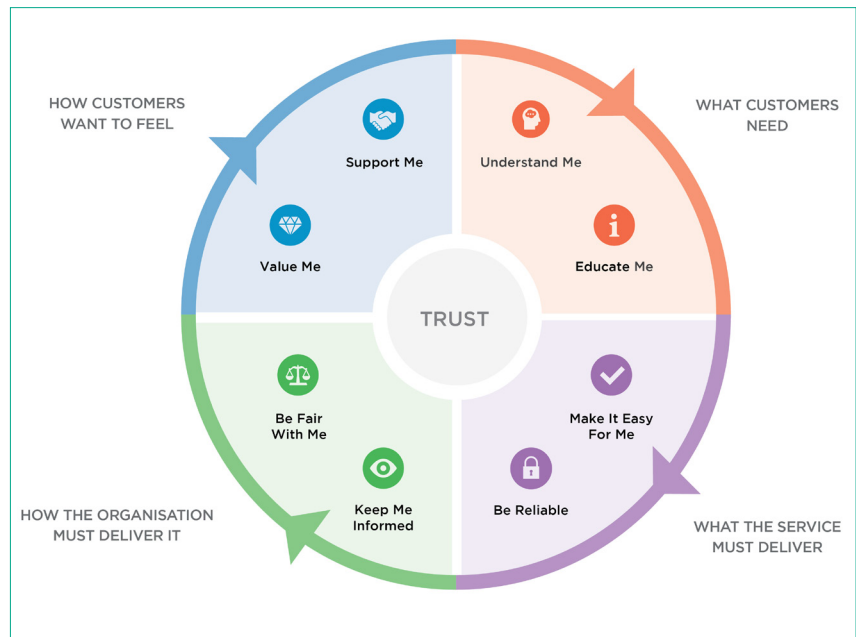
Figure 4. Customer Service Principles.

3. How the organisation must deliver it

- **Be fair with me:** Treat each customer like a person who is valued and appreciated, not just a number.

Provide appropriate solutions that meet each customer's particular needs and be reasonable with our support by considering their individual circumstances.
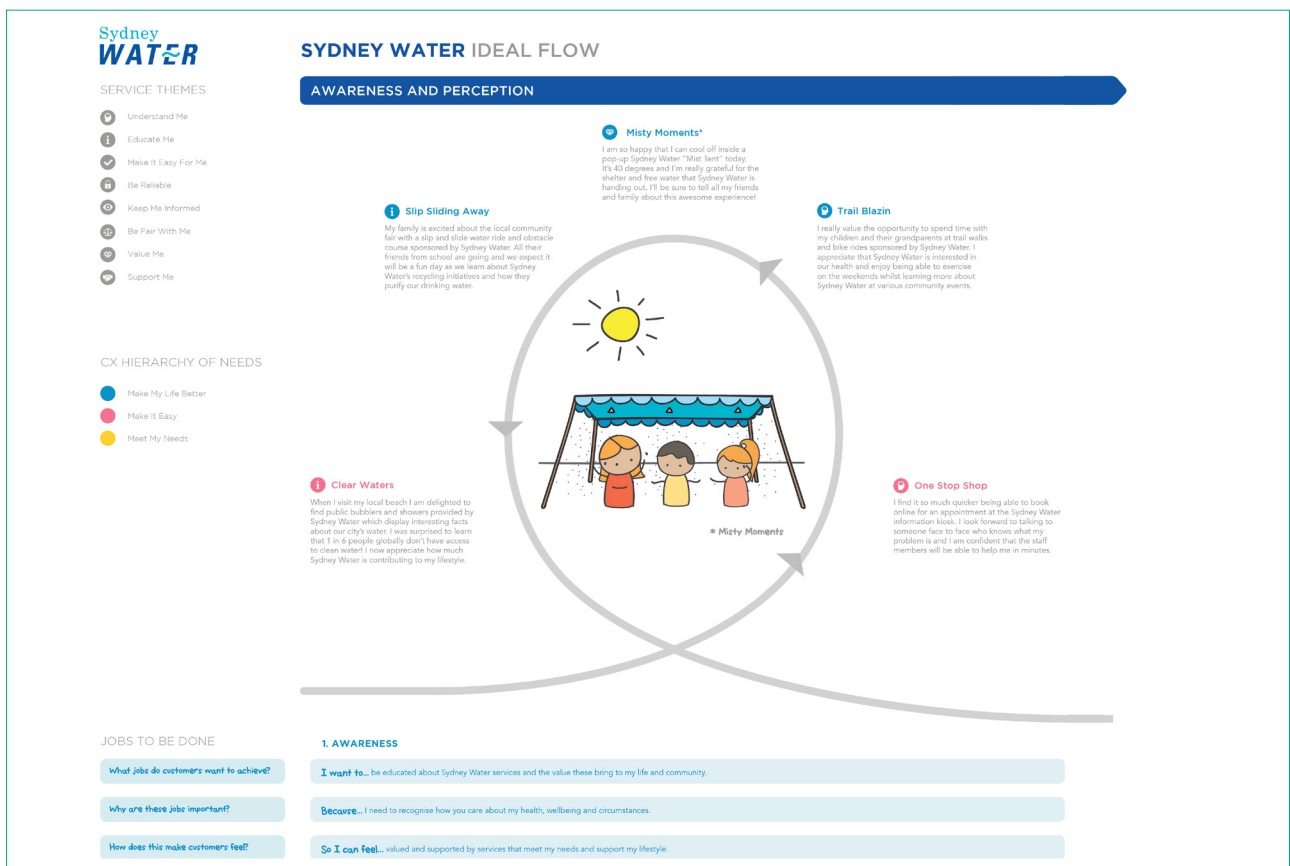
Figure 5. Sydney Water's Ideal Customer Journey.

- **Keep me informed:** Provide customers with meaningful updates that effectively communicate valuable and relevant information, and that empower them with options to make decisions, enabling them to stay in control when impacted by our services.

4. How customers want to feel

- **Support me:** Empathise with customers when they encounter issues by listening to them and providing effective pathways to resolution in a timely manner.

- **Value me:** Consistently provide services in a way that supports customers' circumstances and reflects their individual needs, while helping them achieve a healthy, comfortable and enjoyable lifestyle.

Ideation

Insights generated through the research stage provided Sydney Water with customer needs and pain-points. Co-creation workshops were run with customer groups and Sydney Water staff to come up with ideas that would address unmet customer needs or fix pain-points.

These workshops provided staff with an opportunity to immerse themselves in customer research and see why customers felt the way they did when they interacted with Sydney Water.

Such a perspective enabled them to generate meaningful ideas that didn't try to just improve a process, but tried to address the emotional needs of a customer when they engage with Sydney Water.

Prototype And Test

The ideas generated in the co-creation workshop were tested with the customers to ensure their needs and pain-points were well understood and that the ideas would solve them.

Prototyping and testing were done through presentation of conceptual models to a select group of customers to validate whether the proposed solution met their expectations.

Feedback gained from the customers helped in reworking ideas where appropriate. This gave us the confidence that ideas being proposed were addressing customer needs.

Future State

Ideas validated with the customer were integrated into the ideal customer journey or 'Ideal Flow' (Figure 5).

NEXT STEPS

Phase 1 provided Sydney Water with a high-level and enterprise-wide view of customer interaction, needs and pain-points through a Customer Journey Map. The six key experiences identified require a deeper analysis to transform the way Sydney Water engages with its customers.

Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the program, which are currently in progress, are focusing specifically on the experience small-to-medium size developers have when interacting with Sydney Water and new account holders, respectively.

These projects have already identified significant opportunities to transform the customer experience, which are being implemented over the next three years. The subsequent deep-dives involve transforming the remaining four touch-points identified in the Customer Journey Map.

CONCLUSION

The Customer Experience Design program of work has, for the first time, provided an outside-in and enterprise-wide view of the customer journey when dealing with Sydney Water.

It provides rich customer insight, which is both a critical input into a program for transforming the customer experience, and foundational for building the culture and capability necessary to create a sustained change in the business.

Overall, Phase 1 of the Customer Experience Design project has laid the foundations for a five-year transformation program.

Deep-dive analysis of the journey touch-points identified in this phase has commenced and will continue to provide the business with a steady flow of customer improvement opportunities.

THE AUTHORS

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