

Citizen's Charters- A Handbook

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I THE CITIZEN'S CHARTERS : INDIAN EXPERIENCE

Basic Concept, Origin and Principles

It has been recognised the world over that good governance is essential for sustainable development, both economic and social. The three essential aspects emphasised in good governance are transparency, accountability and responsiveness of the administration. The "Citizen's Charters initiative" is a response to the quest for solving the problems which a citizen encounters, day in and day out, while dealing with organisations providing public services.

The concept of Citizen's Charter enshrines the trust between the service provider and its users. The concept was first articulated and implemented in the United Kingdom by the Conservative Government of John Major in 1991 as a national programme with a simple aim: to continuously improve the quality of public services for the people of the country so that these services respond to the needs and wishes of the users. The programme was re-launched in 1998 by the Labour Government of Tony Blair which rechristened it "Services First".

The basic objective of the Citizen's Charter is to empower the citizen in relation to public service delivery. The six principles of the Citizen's Charter movement as originally framed were:

- (i) Quality: Improving the quality of services;
- (ii) Choice: Wherever possible;
- (iii) Standards: Specifying what to expect and how to act if standards are not met;
- (iv) Value : For the taxpayers' money;
- (v) Accountability: Individuals and Organisations; and
- (vi) Transparency: Rules/Procedures/Schemes/Grievances.

These were later elaborated by the Labour Government as the nine principles of Service Delivery (1998), which are as follows:-

- i. Set standards of service;
- ii. Be open and provide full information;
- iii. Consult and involve;
- iv. Encourage access and the promotion of choice;
- v. Treat all fairly;
- vi. Put things right when they go wrong;
- vii. Use resources effectively;
- viii. Innovate and improve;
- ix. Work with other providers.

The International Scene

The UK's Citizen's Charter initiative aroused considerable interest around the world and several countries implemented similar programmes e.g., Australia (Service Charter, 1997), Belgium (Public Service Users' Charter 1992), Canada (Service Standards Initiative, 1995), France (Service Charter, 1992), India (Citizen's Charter, 1997), Jamaica (Citizen's Charter 1994), Malaysia (Client Charter, 1993), Portugal (The Quality Charter in Public Services, 1993), and Spain(The Quality Observatory, 1992).

Some of these initiatives are very similar to the UK model, whereas others break new ground by leaning on the service quality paradigm of the 'Total Quality Management' (TQM) movement. Some other initiatives are pitched somewhere in between. Even in the UK, in the context of the Next Steps / Modernising Government Initiatives, Citizen's Charters have acquired a service quality face for delivery of public services. The quality tools adopted for improving public services include the Business

Excellence Model, Investors in People, Charter Mark, ISO 9000 and Best Value (Government of UK, 1999).

The Government of Malaysia issued Guidelines on the Client's Charter in 1993 to assist government agencies to prepare and implement Client's Charter, which is "a written commitment by an agency to deliver outputs or services according to specified standards of quality" (Government of Malaysia, 1998). A 'Best Client's Charter Award' was instituted in 1993. The Malaysian system of Client's Charter closely follows the UK Model. A distinction is made, however, between agency-wide and unit charters. The concept of 'service recovery' enjoins taking steps to restore the trust and confidence of the client in a proactive manner when things go wrong.

The Commonwealth Government of Australia launched its Service Charter Initiative in 1997 as part of its on-going commitment to improve the quality of service provided by agencies to the Australian community by moving the government organisation away from bureaucratic processes to customer-focused outcomes. Service Charters are considered a powerful tool for fostering change and require the organisation to focus on services delivered, to measure and assess performance, and to initiate performance improvement. By providing goals for agencies to strive towards, a Charter acts as a surrogate for competition where none exists (Department of Finance and Administration, 1999). Centrelink is a one-stop shop that provides access to Australian government services for over six million customers. Centrelink has adopted one-to-one service as an innovative and personalised approach to service delivery. One-to-one service treats customers with respect and consistency and takes the complexity out of dealing with government.

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat started a Service Standard Initiative in 1995 which took its cue from the Citizen's Charters of the United Kingdom, but enlarged the scope considerably. This Service Standard Initiative in Canada was started against the backdrop of citizen expectations relating to friendly, respectful and courteous service; faster response times; extended hours at government offices; and "one-stop-shopping". At the same time there was a need to reduce the deficit and provide value for money through more efficient use of resources (Treasury Board of Canada, 1995).

A perusal of these four major Citizen's Charter initiatives shows that the service quality approach is embedded in all of them in different degrees. Once a decision is taken to make public services citizen-centric, the customer focus of the 'Total Quality Management' (TQM) variety cannot be far behind. In fact, the Citizen's Charter approach has several things in common with TQM. Both begin by focusing on meeting customer/citizen requirements. Other key common elements are conformance to standards, stakeholder involvement and continuous improvement.

The Indian Scenario

Over the years, in India, significant progress has been made in the field of economic development. This, along with a substantial increase in the literacy rate, (from 51.63% to 65.38% in the last decade) has made Indian citizens increasingly aware of their rights. Citizens have become more articulate and expect the administration not merely to respond to their demands but also to anticipate them. It was in this climate that a consensus began to evolve, since 1996, in the Government on effective and responsive administration. At a Conference of Chief Ministers of various States and Union Territories held on 24 May, 1997 in New Delhi, presided over by the Prime Minister of India, an "Action Plan for Effective and Responsive Government" at the Centre and State levels was adopted. One of the major decisions at that Conference was that the Central and State Governments would formulate Citizen's Charters, starting with those sectors that have a large public interface (e.g., Railways, Telecom, Posts, Public Distribution Systems and the like). These Charters were to include first, standards of service as well as the time limits that the public can reasonably expect for service delivery, avenues of grievance redressal and a provision for independent scrutiny through the involvement of citizen and consumer groups.

The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances in Government of India (DARPG) initiated the task of coordinating, formulating and operationalising Citizen's Charters. The guidelines for formulating the Charters as well as a list of do's and don'ts were communicated to various

government departments/organisations to enable them to bring out focused and effective charters. For the formulation of the Charters, the government agencies at the Centre and State levels were advised to constitute a task force with representation from users, senior management and the cutting edge staff.

The Charters are expected to incorporate the following elements :-

- (i) Vision and Mission Statements;
- (ii) Details of business transacted by the organisation;
- (iii) Details of clients;
- (iv) Details of services provided to each client group;
- (v) Details of grievance redressal mechanism and how to access it; and
- (vi) Expectations from the clients.

Primarily an adaptation of the UK model, the Indian Citizen's Charter has an additional component of 'expectations from the clients' or in other words 'obligations of the users'. Involvement of consumer organisations, citizen groups, and other stakeholders in the formulation of the Citizen's Charter is emphasised to ensure that the Citizen's Charter meets the needs of the users. Regular monitoring, review and evaluation of the Charters, both internally and through external agencies has been enjoined.

As on March, 2005, 107 Citizen's Charters had been formulated by the Central Government Ministries/Departments/Organisations and 629 Charters by various agencies of State Governments & Administrations of Union Territories. Most of the national Charters are posted on the government's websites and are open to public scrutiny. The organisations with Citizen's Charters have been advised to give publicity to their Charters through such means as print/electronic media and awareness campaigns.

Website on Citizen's Charters

A comprehensive website on Citizen's Charters in Government of India (www.goicharters.nic.in) has been developed and was launched by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances on 31 May, 2002. This contains the Citizen's Charters issued by various Central Government Ministries/Departments/Organisations. The website provides useful information, data and links.

Exemplary implementation of the Citizen's Charter

Even as the overall efforts and initiatives of the government on Citizen's Charter were on, it was realised that exemplary implementation of a Charter in a major public interface area of government would not only establish a new concept in the inertia-prone bureaucracy, but also act as a role model for replication in other sectors/areas. The banking sector was identified for this purpose keeping in view the second phase of economic reforms and the fact that this sector was fairly advanced in terms of customer service and was also taking advantage of information technology to speed up various processes. The primary objective of this exercise was to build the Banking Sector as a model of excellence in the implementation of a Citizen's Charter

To begin with, three major National level Banks, namely, Punjab National Bank, Punjab and Sind Bank and Oriental Bank of Commerce, were selected for a hand-holding exercise by the DARPG in the year 2000. The following key issues were highlighted for exemplary implementation of their Citizen's Charters:-

- (i) Stakeholder involvement in the formulation of Citizen's Charters;
- (ii) Deployment of Citizen's Charters in the Banks by full involvement of the staff, specially the employees at the cutting-edge level;
- (iii) Creation of awareness about the Charters amongst the customers of the Banks; and
- (iv) Special training for employees at all levels about the concept and implementation of a Citizen's Charter.

After an evaluation of the current status of the Charters by the identified banks through independent agencies, Action Plans were chalked out to rectify shortcomings. The Charters were, accordingly, revised and standardised on the basis of the model/ mother Charter developed by the Indian Banks Association (IBA). Training for employees of selected branches through master trainers, trained by the National Institute of Bank Management using a module developed in consultation with DARPG was organised. Several measures to give wide publicity to Citizen's Charter were also undertaken.

An external agency was engaged to reassess and reevaluate the implementation of Citizen's Charter of these banks and at the end of this exercise also to document the hand-holding Exercise. The 'National Institute of Bank Management' (NIBM) was assigned this task, which was executed and a document about the exercise was brought out in the Year 2003.

Evaluation of Citizen's Charters

An evaluation of the Citizen's Charters of various government agencies was carried out by DARPG and Consumer Coordination Council, New Delhi, an NGO, in October 1998. The results were quite encouraging given the nascent stage of this initiative in India. A brief questionnaire has been circulated to all Ministries/Departments and State Governments/Union Territories to enable them to undertake an in-house evaluation of their Citizen's Charters. These organisations were also advised to undertake external evaluations, preferably through NGOs.

During the Year 2002-03, DARPG engaged a professional agency to develop a standardised model for internal and external evaluation of Citizen's Charters in a more effective, quantifiable and objective manner. This agency also carried out evaluation of implementation of Charters in 5 Central Government Organisations and 15 Departments/Organisations of States of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. This Agency was also required to suggest methods for increasing awareness, both within the organisation and among the users, and to suggest possible methods for orientation of management and the staff in the task of formulating and deploying Charters.

The major findings of the evaluation carried out by the agency, as stated in its report were:-

- (i) In majority of cases Charters were not formulated through a consultative process;
- (ii) By and large service providers are not familiar with the philosophy, goals and main features of the Charter;
- (iii) In none of the departments evaluated, had adequate publicity been given to the Charters. In most Departments, the Charters were only in the early stages of implementation;
- (iv) No funds were specifically earmarked for awareness generation on Citizen's Charter or for orientation of the staff on various components of the Charter.

Further, the key recommendations in the report, inter alia, stressed upon:-

- (i) The need for citizens and staff to be consulted at every stage of formulation of the Charter;
- (ii) Orientation of staff about the salient features and goals/objectives of the Charter; vision and mission statement of the department; and skills such as team building, problem solving, handling of grievances and communication skills;
- (iii) The need for creation of database on consumer grievances and redress;
- (iv) The need for wider publicity of the Charter through print media, posters, banners, leaflets, handbills, brochures, local newspapers etc. and also through electronic media;
- (v) Earmarking of specific budgets for awareness generation and orientation of staff, and
- (vi) Replication of best practices in this field.

Compendium on Citizen's Charters in Government of India

With the objective of generating awareness among the citizens as well as government functionaries about the commitments of various organisations enshrined in their Citizen's Charter, the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances brought out a Compendium of abridged versions of all Citizen's Charters in Government of India in a book as well as in CD form on 14 May, 2003. The Compendium contains the operative standards and quality of services proposed to be provided as also the public grievance redressal mechanism as committed in the Citizen's Charters. It also contains the name, address, telephone number, e-mail address etc. of nodal officers for Citizen's Charters in Central Government Ministries/Departments/Organisations and also the list of website addresses of Ministry/Department/Organisation concerned.

The Compendium is not only useful for the citizens for ready reference, but also enables them to critically review the functioning of these organisations. It would also help the organisations to compare the standards set by them, vis-à-vis, those set by other organisations.

Regional Seminars

Four Regional Seminars on Citizen's Charters were organised during the year 2001-02, with a view to bring national and state level organisations along with other stakeholders including NGOs, intelligentsia, media etc. on the same platform and to share experiences in formulation and implementation of Citizen's Charter. These seminars were organised at Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, R. C. V. P. Noronha Academy of Administration, Bhopal and Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati. In all 24 State Governments/UT Administrations and 15 Central Government Departments/Organisations participated.

Capacity-Building Workshops

On the basis of the feedback received and experience gained in these seminars, it was decided to organise separate Capacity-Building Workshops with specific focus on:

- (i) Formulation of Charter;
- (ii) Effective implementation of Charter; and
- (iii) Enhancing the capacity of trainers available at State Administrative Training Institutes/Central Civil Services Staff Colleges.

During the year 2002-03, three Capacity Building Workshops on formulation and implementation of Citizen's Charters were organised at H.P. Institute of Public Administration, Shimla (HP), R.C.V.P. Noronha Academy of Administration, Bhopal and Yeshwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration, Pune, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi. Besides, a Capacity Building Workshop for developing Trainers and Training Modules on Citizen's Charter was organised at Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi in December, 2002. In all, 15 States/UT Administrations and 5 Central Government Departments/Organisations participated.

During the year 2003-04, four Capacity Building Workshops on formulation of Citizen's Charter were organised at Administrative Training Institute, Kolkata, Administrative Training Institute, Nainital, HCM Rajasthan State Institute of Public Administration, Jaipur and Administrative Training Institute, Mysore. Two Capacity Building Workshops on Citizen's Charter for Developing Trainers and Training Programmes were also conducted during 2003-04 at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie and Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.

During the year 2004-05, three Capacity Building Workshops on Citizen's Charters were organized at Uttaranchal Academy of Administration, Nainital, HCM Rajasthan State Institute of Administration, Jaipur and Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati.

Department-Specific Workshops

The Department also organised “1-day Department-specific workshops” with the twin objective of generating awareness amongst the public as well as employees and initiating the process of consultation. Furthermore, 13 Department-specific workshops were organised in the States of Jharkhand, Uttaranchal, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra during the Year 2002-03.

Information and Facilitation Counters (IFCs)

Information and Facilitation Counter (IFC) is a facility set up by selected Central Government organisations to provide information to citizens about their programmes/schemes, rules and procedures etc. as well as status of cases/applications. An IFC also acts as a nodal point for redress of public grievances. The IFC, therefore, is a physical manifestation of Citizen’s Charter. Hence, it has now been decided to set up IFCs in all government ministries/departments having Citizen’s Charters. 105 Information and Facilitation Counters / May I Help You/Inquiry Counters have been set up so far.

Evaluation of the functioning of the IFCs was carried out by the DARPG and the Consumer Coordination Council. The organisations concerned have taken action on deficiencies pointed out in these evaluations. This Department also regularly monitors the working of the IFCs through a half-yearly report prescribed for all the organisations that have set up IFCs.

Problems faced in Implementing the Charters

As pointed out earlier, the Citizen’s Charters initiative in India had started in 1997 and most of the Charters formulated thereupon are in a nascent stage of implementation. Introduction of new concepts is always difficult in any organisation. Introduction and implementation of the concept of Citizen’s Charter in the Government of India was much more difficult due to the old bureaucratic set up/procedures and the rigid attitudes of the work force. The major obstacles encountered in this initiative were:-

- (i) The general perception of organisations which formulated Citizen’s Charters was that the exercise was to be carried out because there was a direction from above. The consultation process was minimal or largely absent. It, thus, became one of the routine activities of the organisation and had no focus;
- (ii) For any Charter to succeed the employees responsible for its implementation should have proper training and orientation, as commitments of the Charter cannot be expected to be delivered by a workforce that is unaware of the spirit and content of the Charter. However, in many cases, the concerned staff were not adequately trained and sensitised;
- (iii) Sometimes, transfers and reshuffles of concerned officers at the crucial stages of formulation/implementation of the Citizen’s Charter in an organisation severely undermined the strategic processes which were put in place and hampered the progress of the initiative;
- (iv) Awareness campaigns to educate clients about the Charter were not conducted systematically;
- (v) In some cases, the standards/time norms of services mentioned in Citizen’s Charter were either too lax or too tight and were, therefore, unrealistic, thereby creating an unfavourable impression on the clients of the Charter;
- (vi) The concept behind the Citizen’s Charter was not properly understood. Information brochures, publicity materials, pamphlets produced earlier by the organisations were mistaken for Citizen’s Charters.

Lessons learnt

The following lessons have been learnt from the experience of implementing the Citizen’s Charter initiative till date:

- (i) As with any new effort, the Citizen’s Charter initiative is bound to be looked at initially with skepticism by bureaucrats as well as citizens. Hence, an effective awareness campaign amongst all the stakeholders at the initial stage is essential to overcome this skepticism. These awareness campaigns should be designed and delivered innovatively and effectively.

- (ii) The issuance of Citizen's Charter will not change overnight the mindset of the staff and the clients, developed over a period of time. Therefore, regular, untiring and persistent efforts are required to bring about attitudinal changes.
- (iii) A new initiative always encounters barriers and misgivings from the staff. There is a natural resistance to change, particularly among the cutting-edge staff. Involving and consulting them at all the levels of formulation and implementation of Citizen's Charter will go a long way in overcoming this resistance and will made them an equal partner in this exercise.
- (iv) Instead of trying to reform all the processes at once and encounter massive resistance, it is advisable to break the tasks into small components and tackle them one at a time.
- (v) The charter initiative should have a built-in mechanism for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the working of the Charters, preferably through an outside agency.

Future Vision: Development of Charter Mark

In 1992, the UK Government introduced *Charter Mark*, a scheme for recognising and encouraging excellence in public service. To win a Charter Mark, an organisation has to demonstrate excellence against the following nine Charter Mark criteria which correspond to the principles of public service delivery, namely,

- (i) Performance Standards;
- (ii) Information and openness;
- (iii) Choice and Consultation;
- (iv) Courtesy and helpfulness;
- (v) Putting things right;
- (vi) Value for money;
- (vii) User satisfaction;
- (viii) Improvements in service quality; and
- (ix) Planned improvements and innovations.

In India, the DARPG has identified a professional agency to develop an appropriate Charter Mark scheme. This scheme will encourage and reward improvement in public service delivery with reference to the commitments and standards notified in the Charter. The 'Charter Mark' is proposed to be awarded after due assessment by an independent panel of judges. This would not only give a sense of achievement to the organisation to be awarded the Charter Mark, but also promote a spirit of competitiveness amongst various organisations that have issued Citizen's Charters and generate awareness among citizens. A prototype has been developed by a professional agency, which is in the process of validation in identified Departments/Organisations.

The implementation of Citizen's Charter is an on-going exercise. It has to reflect the extensive and continual changes taking place in the domain of public services. The Indian Government is committed to serve the citizens in an effective and efficient manner to not only meet but also to exceed their expectations. The Citizen's Charter initiative is a major step in this direction.

II FORMULATION OF CITIZEN'S CHARTERS

Rationale of a Citizen's Charter

A Citizen's Charter is the expression of an understanding between citizens and the provider of a public service with respect to the quantity and quality of services the former receive in exchange for their taxes. It is essentially about the rights of the public and the obligations of the public servants.

As public services are funded by citizens, either directly or indirectly through taxes, they have the right to expect a particular quality of service that is responsive to their needs and is provided efficiently at a reasonable cost. The Citizen's Charter is a written, voluntary declaration by service providers about service standards, choice, accessibility, non-discrimination,

transparency and accountability. It should be in accordance with the expectations of citizens. Therefore, it is a useful way of defining for the customers the nature of service provision and explicit standards of service delivery.

A further rationale for the Charters is to help change the mindset of the public official from someone with power over the public to someone with the right sense of duty in spending the public money collected through taxes and in providing citizens with necessary services.

However, the Citizen's Charter should not simply be a document of assurances or a formula which imposes a uniform pattern on every service. It is meant to be a tool kit of initiatives and ideas to raise the level of standards and service delivery and increase public participation, in the most appropriate way. The Charter should be an effective tool to ensure transparency and accountability and should help deliver good governance if implemented vigorously by the government departments.

If successfully implemented, the charter can enable the following:

- **Improved service delivery;**
- **Greater responsiveness of officials towards the public; and**
- **Greater public satisfaction with services.**

Components of a Citizen's Charter

These should include:

- (i) Vision and Mission Statement;
- (ii) Details of Business transacted by the Organisation;
- (iii) Details of clients;
- (iv) Details of services provided to each client group;
- (v) Details of grievance redressal mechanism and how to access it; and
- (vi) Expectations from the clients.

Formulation of Citizens' Charters: A Road Map

- (i) Formation of Task Force;
- (ii) Identification of all Stakeholders and major services to be provided by Organisation;
- (iii) Consultation with Clients/Stakeholders/Staff (Primarily at cutting-edge level) and their representative associations;
- (iv) Preparation of Draft Charter
 - Circulation for comments/suggestions;
 - Modification of Charter to include suggestions;
- (V) Consideration of the Charter by Core Group;
- (VI) Modification of Charter by the Ministry/Department on the basis of suggestions/observations by the Core Group;
- (VII) Approval by the Minister-in-charge;
- (VIII) Submission of a copy of the charter to the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances;
- (IX) Formal issue/release of Charter and putting up on website;
- (X) Sending copies to People's Representatives and all stakeholders;
- (XI) Appointment of a Nodal Officer to ensure effective implementation.

Citizen's Charters - Model Guidelines

The need for a Citizen's Charter arises from the dissatisfaction of the citizen / consumer / customer with the erstwhile quality of service offered by a public sector organisation. The following guidelines should therefore be useful:

- i. To be useful, the Charter must be simple;
- ii. The Charter must be framed not only by senior experts, but by interaction with the cutting edge staff who will finally implement it and with the users (individual organisations);
- iii. Merely announcing the Charter will not change the way we function. It is important to create conditions through interaction and training for generating a responsive climate;
- iv. Begin with a statement of the service(s) being offered;
- v. A mention be made against each service the entitlement of the user, service standards and remedies available to the user in case of the non-adherence to standards;
- vi. Procedures/cost/charges should be made available on line/display boards/ booklets inquiry counters etc at places specified in the Charter;
- vii. Indicate clearly, that while these are not justiciable, the commitments enshrined in the Charter are in the nature of a promise to be fulfilled with oneself and with the user;
- viii. Frame a structure for obtaining feedback and performance audit and fix a schedule for reviewing the Charter every six months at least;
- ix. Separate Charters can be framed for distinct services and for organisations/ agencies attached or subordinate to a Ministry/Department.

Citizens' Charters - General Structure Guidelines

These can be stated as follows:

- i. A brief statement regarding the services concerned;
- ii. Public Interface of the service concerned to be addressed (e.g., Reservation, Passenger amenities by Railways, Mail Delivery, Premium services by Post etc);
- iii. Commitment to Standards (Time frame, Quality of service);
- iv. The Staff : What to expect from them?
: Where are they located?
 - Keeping citizens informed: What information do they need?
 - If things go wrong (remedial measures) : What could go wrong;
Whom to contact;
What to expect to set it right.
 - How citizens can help the organisation?

Dos and Don'ts for Implementing the Charters

- 1 Make haste, slowly.
- 2 List areas of interface.
- 3 Phase out areas for introduction of small steps.
- 4 Involve customer and staff in formulating and implementing them
- 5 Prepare a Master Plan for formulation and implementation over five years and budget for the period.
- 6 Win consumer confidence with small, highly visible measures.
- 7 Be responsive to the need for the charters to be evolving in nature
- 8 Inform the customer of the proposed commitments.

- 9 Use simple language.
- 10 Train you staff.
- 11 Delegate powers.
- 12 Set up systems for feedback and independent scrutiny.

Don't merely make haste.

Don't be unrealistic.

Don't take on more than you can commit.

Don't involve only senior officers in their formulation and implementation. Don't rush into an overall package for the whole Ministry/Department/ Organisation,

Don't promise more than you can deliver.

Don't look upon it as a one-time exercise, with a final outcome.

Don't inform the customer unless you are sure of delivering the service.

Don't use difficult language or jargon.

Don't leave yourself out.

Don't centralise.

Don't continue blindly without regular periodic reassessment of performance.

What Makes a Good Charter?

The elements of a good charter can be said to be:

- i. Focus on Customer Requirements;
- ii. Simple Language;
- iii. Service standards;
- iv. Effective Remedies;
- v. Training;
- vi. Delegation;
- vii. Feedback Mechanism;
- viii. Close Monitoring;
- ix. Periodic Review.

Things to Remember

What Citizens Expect From Government Departments/Service Providers

- i. Reliability, i.e., consistency in performance;
- ii. Responsiveness, i.e., timely service;
- iii. Credibility i.e., having customer interest at heart;
- iv. Empathy, i.e., attention to customer's needs;
- v. Courtesy and care, i.e., physical evidence of willingness to serve.

The six important areas to be covered in every Citizen's Charter

The Six Principles of Citizen's Charters:

- i. Published Standards;
- ii. Openness and Information;
- iii. Choice and Consultation;

8. All complaints will be acknowledged by us within _____ days and final reply on the action taken will be communicated within _____ days.

9. Consultation with our users/stakeholders

- We welcome suggestions from our users.
- We conduct _____ polls
- We hold periodical _____ meetings with users/user representatives and if you wish to be associated with this please contact _____ at _____.
- Please also enter your details at our website www..... indicating your willingness to be available for consultation, survey on the points enlisted in the Charter.

10. We seek your co-operation on the following

Citizen's Charter is a joint effort between us and you to improve the quality of service provided by us and we request you to help us in the following way (give details relevant to the departments concerned)

a)

b)

11. Guide Book/Hand Book/Consumer Helpline

We have published a Handbook for the guidance of our customers. Please contact _____ Officer for more details.

Our helpline number is _____

Our customer information centre is located at _____ Phone No. _____

Other information

a)

b)

We are committed to constantly revise and improve the services being offered under the Charter.

LET US JOIN HANDS IN MAKING THIS CHARTER A SUCCESS!

III DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF NODAL OFFICERS

The duties and responsibilities of 'Nodal Officers for Citizen's Charter' in Central/State Government Ministries/Departments/Public Sector Undertakings/Organisations for formulation and implementation of Citizen's Charters fall in the following categories.

1. Citizen's/Client's Charter:-

1.1 Citizen's/Client's Charter is a document which represents a systematic effort to focus on the commitment of the Organisation towards its Citizens/Clients in respect of Standard of Services, Information, Choice and Consultation, Non-discrimination and Accessibility, Grievances Redress, Courtesy and Value for Money. This also includes expectations of the Organisation from the Citizen/Client for fulfilling the commitment of the Organisation. (Can this be placed be in the introductory chapter)

1.2 A Charter comprises the following components:-

- (i) Vision and Mission Statement;
- (ii) Details of Business transacted by the Organisation;
- (iii) Details of Customers/Clients;
- (iv) Statement of services provided to each Citizen/Client groupseparately and time limits for the same;
- (v) Details of Grievances Redress Mechanism and how to access the same; and

(vi) Expectations from the Citizen/Client

2. Nodal Officer for Citizen's Charter for Central Government Ministries/Departments/Public Sector Undertakings/Organisations

2.1 Each Ministry/Department/Public Sector Undertaking/Organisation proposing to formulate a Citizen's Charter may designate an officer referred to as **Nodal Officer for Citizen's Charter**. This officer may preferably be of the rank of Joint Secretary or equivalent in Ministry/Department and should be selected on the basis of a careful assessment of his/her attitude and suitability for the job.

2.2 The Nodal Officer for Citizen's Charter shall be actively involved in the process of formulation and implementation of Citizen's Charter at each and every stage. Each Ministry/Department/Public Sector Undertaking/autonomous organisation may formulate a job chart for the Nodal Officer for Citizen's Charter keeping in view the duties and responsibilities of Nodal Officer for Citizen's Charter enumerated in subsequent paragraphs.

3. Duties and Responsibilities of Nodal Officer for Citizen's Charter in Central Government

I. Job Title : Nodal Officer for Citizen's Charter

II. Responsible to : Secretary/Head of the Organisation

The Nodal Officer will be responsible for various activities involved in formulation and implementation of Citizen's Charter in the Organisations enumerated below:

3.1 Formulation of Citizen's Charter

(a) Formation of a Task Force in the Organisation to oversee the formulation of the Citizen's Charter. The Nodal Officer shall act as a Member Secretary for the Task Force. The composition of the Task Force shall be:-

(i) 1 - 2 Representatives from top management;

(ii) 2 - 3 Representatives from Middle Management ;

(iii) 2 - 3 Representatives from cutting-edge level staff;

(iv) Representatives from Staff Associations/Unions;

(v) 2 - 3 Representatives from citizen's / client's/ Citizen's Associations/NGOs/Consumer Groups.

3.1.1 Duties of Task Force

(i) Identification of all stakeholders/clients and services/products provided by the Organisation in consultation with the officers/staff/clients representative etc;

(ii) Determining the standards of outputs/services etc. provided by the Organisation in consultation with all stakeholders and officers/Staff etc. (particularly at cutting-edge level);

(iii) Preparation of a draft Charter and circulation amongst various clients/stakeholders, management levels and staff for comments/suggestions;

(iv) Modification of draft Charter to include suggestions etc;

(v) Submission of draft Charter to Department of AR & PG for consideration by the 'Core Group on Citizen's Charter' and liaisoning with the Department of AR & PG;

(vi) Modification of the draft Charter on the basis of suggestions/observations made by the Core Group on Citizen's Charter;

(vii) Seeking the approval of Minister In-Charge;

(viii) Issue/release/publish the Charter in public domain.

3.2 Implementation of Citizen's Charter

3.2.1 Ensuring wide publicity of the Charter. Conduct awareness campaigns. Putting up the Charter on the Ministry/Department/ Organisation's website and sending copies to people's representatives and all stakeholders and their representative associations etc.

3.2.2 Organising training programmes, workshops etc. for orientation and motivation of officers and staff of the Organisation for aligning the workforce to the commitments made in the Charter so as to ensure proper implementation of the Charter.

3.3 Monitoring of Citizen's Charter

3.3.1 Set up an Integrated Performance Monitoring System and monitor organisation's performance vis-à-vis commitments made in the Charter on a regular basis and keep the Head of the Department informed.

3.3.2 Publish data relating to performance of the organisation vis-à-vis commitments made in the Citizen's Charter, in the Annual Report and share with citizens/clients using appropriate media.

3.4 Evaluation and Review of Citizen's Charter

3.4.1 Arrange for regular evaluation of implementation of Citizen's Charter from within the organisation(s) as well as from without through assessment of the level of satisfaction among citizens/clients. The findings should be reported to the Head of the Department/Organisation on a regular basis.

3.4.2 Based on the feedback/assessment/evaluation, necessary steps should be taken for review/revision of the Citizen's Charter.

3.4.3 It is necessary to ensure that activities related to formulation/implementation of Citizen's Charter form a part of the Annual Action Plan of the Organisation.

3.4.4 It is also necessary to ensure that all the activities relating to Citizen's Charter during the year are included in the Annual Reports of the Ministry/Department/Organisation concerned.

- 4 The State Governments may set up Nodal Officers along similar lines for the review and maintaining of Citizen's Charter developed for the various departments and corporations in their State following the above guidelines.

IV EVALUATION AND REVIEW OF CITIZEN'S CHARTERS

Need to Evaluate, Monitor and Review

It is critically important that the evaluation system for performance in line with the Citizen's Charter standards is congruent with the department's broader performance information system. Thus, the standards in the charter should not be different from those of individual officials as per their job description or as set out in their departmental indicators.

Evaluation should take place regularly, ideally quarterly. This should be IT-enabled so that data can be analysed in real-time and reports on service failure against the charter standards can be generated automatically.

A practice of self-assessment should be put in place enabling the staff to assess how well they think they are delivering services. This can be compared with feedback from customers. The charter mark system is another way to evaluate the citizen's charters. Other forms of evaluation, such as exit polls for user groups and surveys and feedback forms give a good indication of the quality of services.

External Evaluation of Citizen's Charter

A survey may be done with the help of voluntary organizations or by directly distributing a questionnaire to randomly selected samples of users of the service. It is generally accepted that about 300 samples in a District and 100 at taluk level are sufficient for survey at initial stages. Once such surveys become regular, the sample size can be increased.

Check List for Citizen's Charter

Given below are select criteria in the form of a **check list** for policy-makers and implementing staff alike to enable effective assimilation of fundamentals that must be part of any Charter document.

General criteria

Charter documents should be written for consumers and must take account of their needs. They should describe initiatives to provide a quality service. The following aspects may be examined:

- i. Is it really for its consumers?
- ii. Does the title of the Charter document indicate that public services are there to serve the individual citizen or consumer and that the Charter is for the consumer? For example, the Municipal Charter or the PDS Charter.
- iii. Does the Charter say that consumers were consulted about its form/contents?
 - a) If not does it describe how the department will be consulting consumers about its Charter initiatives?
 - b) Does it cover the issues which matter most to consumers?
 - c) Does it reflect their priorities?
- iv. Does the Charter invite readers to comment on its form or contents? If so, how?
 - a) Does it give an address or telephone number for making comments?
 - b) Does it name someone to send comments to?

Does it name names?

Does the Charter promote the principle that providing public services should involve individual accountability? For example,

- Does it say that staff that is in contact with the public will identify themselves (by wearing name-tags for example, or giving their names over the phone or in letters)?
- Is it clear about who authorizes the Charter and takes responsibility for it? For example, Charters are issued by the Head of the Department or the Secretary of the Department concerned.
- Does the Charter give the name, address or telephone numbers of relevant officials (e.g., someone to whom consumers can send their comments on the charter, like a designated complaints office?)
- Does the Charter contain any other initiatives to make the services more personalized? For example, May I help you counters, e-mail, call centres etc.

For whose convenience?

Some Charters promise that the services will be organized for the convenience of the consumer (rather than the organization). Does the charter contain any other specific initiatives to make the service more user-friendly? For e.g.:

- Does it extend or adapt office opening hours to suit the convenience of the public, and does it promise to do so?
- Often the services provided by one government agency involve other agencies. Does the Charter say that a given service provider has negotiated with other public services on consumers' behalf to ensure they get an agreed standard of service?

Does it take account of special needs?

Does the Charter contain a commitment to the principle that public service should be designed to meet the needs of all current or potential consumers- including individuals with special needs or concerns such as the old, disabled, children, women?

The obligation to consult

Consulting consumers is essential to developing a quality service. A comprehensive Charter document will indicate a commitment to consultation. The questions that need to be considered thus are:

- i. Does the Charter promote the principle that the public service should consult their consumers and use that information to help them better?
- ii. Does it make any practical commitments to consult consumers and to change the service in the light of the views and demands of consumers?
- iii. Does the Charter promise to publish the results of surveys and other forms of consultation?
- iv. Does the Charter promise to consult consumers in any of the following ways:
 - a) By carrying out independent opinion surveys? (If so, how, when and on what)?
 - b) By consulting relevant consumer or voluntary groups on, or involving them in, the design or interpretation of opinion surveys?
 - c) By setting up, supporting resourcing or convening consumer meetings, consultation bodies or other advisory groups?
 - d) By appointing or seconding consumers to management bodies?
 - e) By monitoring complaints?
 - f) By consulting MPs, MLAs about the concerns of consumers?
 - g) By consulting staff, especially those in regular contact with consumers, about consumers concerns?
 - h) By consulting local councilors about the concerns of consumers?
 - i) By consulting other relevant government agencies or organizations which may have information about the concerns of consumers?

The obligation to inform and be accountable

Does the Charter promote the principle that public service should provide information for, and make themselves accountable to, their consumers? If so, what do they do about it?

Practicing what it preaches

- How readable and user-friendly is the Charter document? For example,
 - a) Is it easy to handle?
 - b) Is it well laid out?
 - c) Does it have enough headings and are they relevant?
 - d) If it is more than a few pages long, does it have a table of contents?
 - e) Does it have an index, if not would one have been helpful?
 - f) Does it have a readable type size?
 - g) Is it written in plain language?
- Does the Charter tell consumers how to have a say in the way the service is provided or how to participate in formal consultation process?
- Does the Charter explain how to complain?

How the service is working

All Charters say something about how the public service is going about its business. Charters may provide information ranging from ideals which are not necessarily achievable- at least in the short term to practical information about the standard of service consumers have a right to expect. This section of the checklist covers the various ways in which Charters can and do account for how the services are working.

- Does the Charter describe the services the organization provides?
- In general, to what extent does the charter provide information about how the service is working?

Long-term plans, aspirations and service philosophy

Does the Charter describe the department's or agency's long-term plans and aspirations? Does it describe the department's or agency's service philosophy? For example 'We are committed to achieving these high standards of service through a professional, efficient and quality service, which provides prompt and accurate help and information which is clear and accessible.

Monitoring and reporting performance

Charter documents often seek also to tell readers how well the department or agency has been working. They can only do this if the organization has been monitoring its own performance for some time. Some charters, however are only able to promise that they are about to start monitoring and reporting their performance.

It is also important to know answers to the following questions:

- i. Does the Charter promise that the department or agency will monitor how well it is performing and report this to its users?
- ii. Which particular aspects of the service's performance were chosen for monitoring and why? How will they be monitored and how will the results be published?
- iii. Does the Charter say how performance is to be monitored (if at all)? For example –
 - (a) in-house;
 - (b) by some other independent organization (like a market research company), (c) by User Organisations;
- iv. Does it say how regularly performance is to be monitored (e.g., half yearly, yearly);
- v. Does it say which aspects of the service's performance are monitored and the result reported? (for instance, how long it takes to process a claim, the quality of drinking water supplied);
- vi. Does it say why those aspects of the service's performance were chosen? For example,
 - (a) This information has always been collected by us,
 - (b) They are the only readily available measurable aspects of the service;
- vii. Does it say how and where the service will report its performance to the public (e.g., in posters, at the office or the Press, Radio, TV etc.);
- viii. Does the Charter say whether performance is getting better or worse (for example, by comparing this year's performance with last year's);
- ix. Does the Charter set or promise to set specific standards for the level of service consumers can expect?
- x. If so, how and why were these set? For example, (a) are they new standards, based on the level of service consumers expect; (b) are they the same at last year's; or (c) are they based on last year's but with the standard raised?
- xi. Does each standard or target apply to the individual user or consumer? (For example, a standard that is meaningful to an individual consumer might say that the service processes each individual claim within 21 days.

Rights and guarantees

It is one thing to set a performance standard or target for, say, how long consumers have to wait for a claim to be processed. Consumers will want to know if they have a right to that level of service and what happens if the standard is not met.

A set standard should be enforceable. A mere target may be a level of service the organization hopes to achieve but cannot guarantee. To what extent does the Charter guarantee that consumers will receive specific standards of service, or state that they have a right to that level of service?

The obligation to provide redress

Virtually all Charters involve a commitment to put things right if they go wrong. The main way they do so is by promising a proper procedure for dealing with complaints in the first place. Some, but not all, charters also promise to provide a specific remedy, such as cash compensation, when things go wrong.

Complaint Procedures

- i. Does the Charter say that it has established, or soon will establish a procedure for dealing with complaints?
- ii. If so, does the complaints procedure contain the following features?
- iii. Does it say that consumers can complain informally to any member of staff with whom they have contact, and that they will try to resolve the problem on the spot.
- iv. Does it say that consumers can make a formal complaint?
- v. Does it say that there is a complaints officer, give his or her name and explain how to make contact?
- vi. Does it guarantee that a full investigation of a complaint will be carried out and a full reply provided?
- vii. Does it specify target times within which they will:
 - (a) acknowledge the complaint,
 - (b) provide a full response; or
 - (c) give an interim reply, explaining by when a full response will be provided.
- viii. Does it set out a procedure by which, if consumers are dissatisfied with the initial response, they can take the matter further?
- ix. To what extent is the complaints procedure, or any stage in that procedure, 'independent'? (e.g., some organizations set up an independent complaints officer or 'Ombudsman'?).
- x. If there are separate procedures for dealing with different types of complaints (such as complaints about medical negligence as distinct from complaints about hospital food) does it explain this clearly? Does it explain how to make such complaints?
- xi. Does it insist or imply that all formal complaints must be in writing? Or does it allow complaints to be made in person or over the telephone?
- xii. Does it invite consumers to make constructive comments and suggestions in addition to complaints and does it suggest how to do so?
- xiii. Does it say that if consumers are dissatisfied with the organization's complaints procedure, there are external and fully independent avenues for taking the complaint further, such as Lok Adalat, Ombudsman, and Regulatory Commission and so on?
- xiv. Does the Charter tell consumers how to get independent advice on, or assistance with, their complaint (for instance, from a consumer group or facilitation counter etc.)?

Compensation and other remedies

A Charter needs to specify the circumstances in which it will provide redress or compensation or other remedies if things go wrong?

A Citizen's Charter can be assessed or ranked on a scale of 1 to 100 by examining the different components of the Charter. One of the ways has been illustrated as follows:

Citizen's Charters Assessment Parameters

Charter in General

* Title	2
* Context (Preamble/Background)	5
* Covers core and critical areas	6

* Initiatives	4
* Takes account of special needs	3
Sub Total	20

Obligation to Consult

* Mechanism of feedback on forms and contents	6
* Consult in future	4
* Methods of Consultation	5
Sub Total	15

Obligation to Inform

* Specifies names of relevant officials	4
* Seeking further information	5
* Monitoring and Reporting performance	6
Sub Total	15

Setting of Standards

* Fixing time limits	6
* Targets and standards of service	6
* Rights and guarantees	8
Sub Total	20

Obligation to Provide Redress & be Accountable

* Complaints procedure	10
* Compensation or Remedies	10
Sub Total	20

Cohesiveness 10

Overall Assessment

Charter in General	20
Obligation to Consult	15
Obligation to Inform	15
Setting of Standards	20
Obligation to Provide redress & be accountable	20
<hr/>	
Cohesiveness	10
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Total Marks 100

Comments:

Evaluation, Monitoring and Review of Charters – A Summary

- i. Evaluation must be both internal and external;
- ii. Evaluation and monitoring are necessary for improving standards of services;
- iii. Regular evaluation and monitoring of the performance standards builds confidence among the users of the service and standards may be made more acceptable;
- iv. Evaluation can be quarterly, half-yearly or yearly. Evaluation must be done at least once in a year;
- v. Evaluation report must be widely publicized within and outside the organization;

- vi. Evaluation enables process review and re-engineering of services provided by Government Departments;
- vii. Evaluation and monitoring is better done through computerization and online access of information to the top management to help decision making;
- viii. Evaluation must provide a reward system for services of staff who provide excellent service.

External Evaluation has the following advantages

- i. Improves transparency;
- ii. Validates Internal Evaluation;
- iii. Helps comparison with International Standards;
- iv. Makes known customer expectations;
- v. Helps in fixing correct user charges and to measure willingness to pay;
- vi. It can be undertaken by involving NGOs, professional bodies, consumer activists, academic bodies, research institutions etc.;
- vii. Voluntary channel for external evaluation can also include newspaper columns as sources;
- viii. An appropriate Report Card system can be developed.

Evaluation- Review

- i. Sound Evaluation should lead to retraining of staff;
- ii. Annual revision of standards through internal and external evaluation is desirable;
- iii. For owning citizens charter, a reward system must be put in place;
- iv. Annual reports of organization must cover implementation of citizen's charter;
- v. Implementation of citizens charters to be part of staff appraisal systems;
- vi. Commitment of Government to citizens to better standards of service delivery must be 'visible';
- vii. Government reviews of public utility must be on the basis of implementation of citizen's charter;
- viii. Involving an external agency for rating of Public Utilities is appropriate from the point of view of 'Good Governance'.

Charter Mark

The Charter Mark System was adopted in U.K. to evaluate and reward departments offering best service in keeping with their Citizen's Charters. The following eight criteria are taken into account and marks are awarded to each aspect to decide the best performance. These criteria are:

- i. Standards;
- ii. Information and Openness;
- iii. Choice and Helpfulness;
- iv. Putting Things Right;
- v. Value for Money;
- vi. Customer Satisfaction;
- vii. Measurable Improvements in Quality of Services;
- viii. Innovative Enhancement of Services at no Additional Cost.

V EFFECTIVE COMPLAINTS HANDLING

Introduction

Customer complaints are one of the most available and yet underutilized sources of consumer and market information; as such. They can become the foundation for an organization/department's quality and service recovery programmes. In simplest terms, a complaint is a statement about expectations that have not been met. It is also, and perhaps more importantly, an opportunity for an organization to satisfy a dissatisfied customer by fixing a

service or product breakdown. In this way, a complaint is a gift customers give to a business. The organization will benefit from opening this package carefully and seeing what is inside.

Designing and Implementing Effective Complaints Handling Systems

A complaint system should:

- i. Be easily accessible and well publicized;
- ii. Be simple to understand and use;
- iii. Be speedy, with established time limits for action and keeping people informed of progress;
- iv. Be fair, comprehensive and impartial in its investigation;
- v. Be confidential, to maintain the confidentiality of both the staff and the complainant;
- vi. Be informative, providing information to top management so that services can be improved;
- vii. Set out clearly the volume of complaints, broken down by different categories;
- viii. Include an analysis of response time;
- ix. Inform the complainant of the proposed action.

Without a good complaint redressal system, Citizen's Charters have no effect. Departments should establish highly credible & responsive complaints procedures and redressal systems.

- Most dissatisfied customers do not complain. The average business does not hear from 96% of its unhappy customers;
- For every complaint received there will be another many times more customers with problems, and some of these problems will be serious;
- Complaints may not be registered not because people think it's not worth the time and effort; but because they may not know how or where to complain, or they may believe that the department would be indifferent to them.

Before anyone can make a complaint, one needs to have certain information. This includes rights and responsibilities. People should be told not only what their rights are as receivers of public service, but also know their responsibilities. This can be done best through a clear statement provided in the Citizen's Charter.

Basic Steps for Effective Complaints Management

- i. Acknowledge complaints;
- ii. Designate a location to receive complaints;
- iii. Develop a system for record keeping;
- iv. Process and record complaints;
- v. Investigate and analyze the complaints;
- vi. Keep the customer informed of the progress;
- vii. Periodically analyze the complaints and improve the process.

Feedback can be sought in the following ways:

- Over-the-counter at the service outlets;
- By toll-free telephone number/telephone/fax;
- By post;
- By community/consumer organizations;
- Through constituting consultative committees;
- Internet/e-mail

Redress Options

A recommended menu of redress options could be:

- i. An apology;
- ii. An explanation;

- iii. Assurance that the same thing will not happen again, backed up by action and monitoring;
- iv. Action taken to put things right;
- v. Financial compensation.

Publishing Complaints Information

- i. Publishing complaints information is in line with the principle of general public service accountability and transparency;
- ii. It demonstrates to the public that complaints are taken seriously and it is worthwhile to complain.

The department must publish information on complaints received at least on a yearly basis and should include:

- Numbers and types/categories of complaints;
- Speed of response to the complaints received;
- Action taken as a result of complaints to improve services.

Organisations must decide for themselves the level of detail to be recorded about complaints received, but minimum data should include:

- Name, address and telephone number of the complainant;
- Date of receipt;
- Details of the complaint, subject or issue;
- What redress the person wants;
- Immediate action to be taken on the complaint.

Information about complaints should be submitted to the senior officers and policy makers on a regular basis.

How to Complain?

This means giving names, addresses and phone numbers of the members of staff or secretaries to contact with any complaint. Time targets for responding should be stated for:

- Acknowledging complaints;
- Responding to complaints;
- Keeping people informed if the response target can not be met and explaining the reasons for the same;
- The possible outcome - the information should state what redress people can expect when they have a complaint.

The Role of I.T. – Computerization of Data

Information Technology has given an added feature to the way in which information can be stored in government departments. The data on complaints is stored with ease and can be accessed comfortably without tedious record maintenance. The database becomes accessible to every level of the administration and redress is also possible more effectively and quickly. It becomes convenient to record and track complaints and produce reports on complaint redressal. This also enables measurement of customer satisfaction through analysis of questionnaires generated amongst users.

Reviewing Complainants

Complainants should have the opportunity to have their complaint reviewed if they are dissatisfied with response. Each department should determine the best arrangement to suit that position. Government departments should make it easy for the public to lodge complaints. They could do this by:

- Leaflets and posters;
- Booklets;
- The media – radio, T.V. local press;

- Telephone directory;
- Contact – Help lines, i.e., Telephone numbers.

People will only complain if they feel that the organization listens to their complaints and acts on them. They will not do so if they think that it will not bring any result. These organizations must make it clear to the public that complaints are welcomed and that information will be used to improve services.

Another crucial aspect is fear among users. Having no other alternative, the users might feel that the department might discontinue their services or harass in other ways. People may not complain if they fear that the service will somehow single them out for harassment and punish them for complaining. This is particularly true, if the relationship between the user and the service puts the user in a potentially vulnerable position e.g. electricity, water, telephones etc.

Handling Complaints within the Organization:

Each department should have procedures on dealing with complaints which are clearly understood and followed by the staff. The procedures should be simple and enable speedy solutions to the complaint received.

Changing Attitudes

If a complaint system is to be effective, simply having procedures may not be enough. It is important that staff have the “right attitude” towards complaints. This involves

- Listening sympathetically to people who have felt a cause to complain;
- Recognizing that complaints handling is an integral part both of good service and customer care and not a nuisance;
- Understanding the benefits of good complaints handling and consequences of poor complaints handling and welcome complaints as an opportunity;
- Putting things right for the citizen and to learn the lesson and improve service.

In this context, the eight step **Gift Formula** devised by Janelle Barlow and Claus Moller is extremely useful. The Gift Formula is a step-by-step process that, in its optimal form, is delivered in a set order. It may be noted however, that, there might be occasions when it will be more appropriate to vary the sequence. The steps are as follows:

- i. Say “Thank you”;
- ii. Explain why you appreciate the complaint;
- iii. Apologize for mistake(s);
- iv. Promise to do something about the problem immediately;
- v. Ask for necessary information;
- vi. Correct the mistake – promptly;
- vii. Check customer satisfaction;
- viii. Prevent future mistakes.

Say “Thank you”. Do not think about whether customers have a legitimate complaint or not. Just consider the complaint valuable information and thank them for the gift. The expression should be as natural and spontaneous as the gratitude shown when receiving a gift/present. It must be made sure that the body language demonstrates appreciation for the complaint and that the service provider supports the customer’s right to complain. Eye contact, an understanding nod, and a friendly smile can work wonders.

Explain why you appreciate the complaint. “Thank you” by itself can sound empty. You need to qualify it by saying something about how hearing the complaint will allow you to better address the problem.

Apologize for the mistake. It is important to apologize to customers, but it should not be the first step. You create a more powerful rapport with customers by saying, “Thank you, I appreciate your telling me about this.” Then comes the apology.

Promise to do something about the problem immediately. Once you have apologized, do not ask for anything else right away. Do not start to interview the customer. Service recovery has two aspects: psychological and tangible. The psychological dimension helps everyone feel better about the situation that has created dissatisfaction. The tangible dimension is doing something to fix the situation. Tangible responses are steps that will cost money or time. Steps one through four of the Gift Formula are part of the psychological response; they cost nothing and are easy to implement.

Ask for necessary information. "In order for me to give you fast service, could you please give me some information?" Do not say, "I need some information, otherwise I can't help you," you are the one asking for help from the customers. They are the ones who have brought you the gift. Ask only for what is necessary. But ask for all relevant details as by questioning, you will discover the real problem. Sometimes they only want to let you know something happened; they don't necessarily want anything from you.

Correct the mistake – promptly. Do what you said you would do. A sense of urgency will be greatly appreciated by the customer. Rapid responses say you are serious about service recovery. A sense of urgency lets you get back in balance with the customer. The Gift Formula will not be adequate if you do not fix the problems to the customer's satisfaction.

Check customer satisfaction. Follow up. Call your customers back to find out what happened. Ask them directly if they are satisfied with what you did for them. If appropriate, tell them what you are doing to prevent this from happening in the future so that they feel good about having helped you with their complaints. Thank them again for your complaints. You are now in partnership.

Prevent future mistakes. Make the complaint known throughout the organization so this kind of problem can be prevented in the future. Fix the system without rushing to blame the staff. Punish your processes, not your people. Staff members will be more likely to pass along complaints to management if they know this is the company's approach to complaints.

Complaints systems are unlikely to be fully effective if they are not supported and supervised at higher levels. Senior officials should regularly review complaints information and ensure that complaints handling is built into all performance reports of the department. Each department may consider putting up on a display board their PLEDGE to welcome complaints.

VI INFORMATION AND FACILITATION COUNTERS (IFC)

Introduction

An integral aspect of administrative reforms both in the short term and in the longer perspective is related to the speedy and easy access of information to the public on the services and activities of Government and the development of an appropriate Management Information System in Government. There are considerable delays in redressal of grievances and securing access to information, since Government departments with a public service interface do not have a mechanism to provide information to the citizens across the counter or to deal with their queries and complaints at a single point.

The Government of India has decided that all offices of the Government and agencies under it should have a computerized public interface, aimed at dissemination of information to the public for a fee or free of charge. The Central Government Ministries and their agencies should take steps to ensure the provision of all unclassified information on procedures and decisions to the public through facilitation counters which should be set up near the Reception Hall of the Ministry, offices etc. similar to the Lakhina model in Maharashtra. These counters would be operated continuously during the day by trained officials with courteous approach, with the capacity to converse in English and the local language and capable of using computers. These counters can be provided with computer consoles to provide instant information on the status of pending cases, waiting lists, etc. and also print out permits and licenses across the counter wherever possible.

So far 105 Ministries/Departments/Organizations have set up IFCs/"May I Help You"/"Enquiry Counters". These Ministries/Departments/Organizations have designated a senior officer as Contact Officer who is overall in-charge of the IFC and can be contacted in case of any difficulty or feedback.

Salient Features

Provide information regarding services, schemes and procedure through brochures, booklets, reports etc. Provide information regarding position of waiting lists and applications through computer screens updated every day and through computerized query to Departmental data base.

Provide information regarding such matters as bill payments, registrations, land/house allotment etc. over the phone or personally to the public.

Forms which are to be utilized for various procedures should be available at the Facilitation Centre, even if the processing is to be done elsewhere.

Receive complaints, issue acknowledgment slips indicating the section dealing with the complaints.

A sufficiently Senior Officer is to man the Facilitation Centres with appropriate orientation, capable of speaking English and local language for handling customers and knowledge of use of computers. Time limits and other details should be notified through display boards at the Facilitation Centres for completion of various procedures and for disposal of cases.

Ensure easy accessibility to Facilitation Centres for the average citizen through publicity regarding the location and hours of access. It will also be helpful to utilise the Interactive Voice System where feasible for enquiry response.

Duties and responsibilities of the Contact Officers of IFCs

The Contact Officer of the Information and Facilitation Counter is the overall in charge of the unit and is the link between the IFC and the mother organisation. He/She has to assess the information needs of the clients, create the corresponding supporting system at IFC, arrange for the posting of suitable personnel and also to motivate them for the assigned job. Therefore, it is imperative that a senior level officer not below the rank of Deputy Secretary, Director should be nominated as the Contact Officer and he/she should be reporting to the Head of the Department directly.

Their duties and responsibilities as Contact Officer, in addition to the duties and responsibilities of the post that he/she is holding, would be as follows:-

(A) Planning

- (i) The Contact Officer will act as a link between the IFC and the mother organisation and project the role of IFC before the senior management.
- (ii) He/She will identify the clients/prospective visitors of the organisation and assess their information needs/possible queries, initially on the basis of substantive functions of the organisation and subsequently on the basis of analysis of the visitors' queries.
- (iii) He/She will plan, visualize and install the supporting system, the source of information, flow of information to and from the IFC, the space/layout and other infrastructure required at the counter.
- (iv) He/She will take steps to create public awareness about existence of IFC through adequate publicity.

(B) Organizing

As an organizer, the role of the Contact Officer will be:

- (i) To assess the manpower requirement with job profiles, to identify suitable personnel, preferably the willing ones, for IFC and to arrange their posting;
- (ii) To provide proper orientation and motivation to the personnel by clarifying the importance of their work at the IFC and its importance in building the image of the organisation;
- (iii) To identify the training needs of the functionaries at IFC and arrange suitable training programmes in behavioural skills, computer operation and other areas of operation;
- (iv) To ensure availability of necessary tools like computer with printer, telephone line (internal as well as external), photocopier etc. basic amenities like drinking water/toilet facilities, proper sitting space for visitors, connectivity within the organization through Local Area Network (LAN);
- (v) To install proper feedback mechanism through visitors' register/suggestion box and inviting suggestions from NGOs etc.
- (vi) To ensure proper signage indications for easy access to the IFC.

(C) Controlling

The Contact Officer will be controller of the IFC mechanism and his role in the capacity would be as under:-

- (i) To ensure upkeep and tidiness at the counter.
- (ii) To ensure punctuality and discipline among the personnel.
- (iii) To ensure availability of relevant information material like Annual Report, brochures of schemes, projects of the organisation, periodicals, booklets, Citizen's Charter, Departmental Telephone Directory, list of officers dealing with substantive functions along with their Telephone Nos., copies of departmental instructions, list of priced publications along with the details of outlets, applications forms of public usage etc.
- (iv) To ensure that IFC is included in the organisation's mailing list and all the circulars etc. on policy changes of general interests are sent to it.
- (v) To attend to the day- to- day problems/personal needs of the staff.
- (vi) To ensure timely submission of periodical reports/returns by IFC to DARPG.

(D) Supervising

The Contact Officer will perform the following functions in the capacity of the supervising officer:-

- (i) Keeping track of complaints/grievances,
- (ii) To scrutinize the visitor's register every week.
- (iii) To analyze the suggestions/feedback received through the suggestion box or visitors register and initiate corrective action.
- (iv) To conduct surprise/periodical visits at the counter to see the mannerism and behaviour of the personnel manning IFC.

- (v) To ensure that the telephone queries are being attended to with courtesy and their record is being maintained.
- (vi) To see that the names and telephone No. of Director of Grievances and the Contact Officer are displayed prominently.
- (vii) To arrange visits of the senior officers to the counter.
- (viii) To arrange annual O&M inspection of the IFC.
- (ix) To arrange for wide and regular publicity of the IFC in the media.

VII HOW TO MAKE THE CHARTERS A SUCCESS

To Make the Citizen's Charters a success the following are needed:-

- i. A Sense of urgency;
- ii. Ownership of the Charter by the Head of the Department and the entire staff;
- iii. At the State level, a committee headed by the Chief Minister should be constituted to oversee the implementation and progress of the Citizen's Charters;
- iv. Constant interaction with the stakeholders;
- v. Motivating the staff and performance review of the staff based on the criteria outlined in the charter.
- vi. Taking corrective measures;
- vii. Simplification of procedures and systems;
- viii. Reducing hierarchy, decentralization.

Citizen's Charters should be seen as:-

- i. A partnership between people and the Government;
- ii. Citizen's Charter is not just a concept, but a programme of action;
- iii. They are a part of democratic reforms;
- iv. Citizen's Charters give people orientation and customer focus;
- v. Citizen's Charters are a pro-active approach to good governance;
- vi. Political parties, administrators, and even judiciary must encourage Citizen's Charters.

The key to success lies in:-

- i. Creating guarantees and redress policies;
- ii. Building service standards into the performance management system of the organisation;
- iii. Publicizing and comparing performance against the standards;
- iv. Creating awards for meeting tough customer service standards.

Lessons Learnt in Quality Assurance from Examples Worldwide

- i. Involve customers in the creation of guarantees, standards, redress policies, complaint systems, and customer service agreements.**

This is necessary to know what is important to the customer. It is prudent not to assume what the customer wants. Customer surveys are useful here, but face-to-face contact with customers is even more important. Customer councils and different types of customer voice tools can be used for this.

- ii. Educate customers about the services that an organisation provides, so they will have realistic notions of what is possible and will understand their own responsibilities.**

Often services won't work unless customers uphold their end of the deal. e.g., tax agencies can't send speedy refunds if taxpayers don't fill out their returns completely and accurately. Permit offices cannot process permits rapidly if developers hide information from them. In cases like these, add customer (or complier) responsibilities to the service standards and guarantees – and publicise the same.

iii. Keep pressure on from outside the organization to create meaningful guarantees, standards, redress policies and complaint systems.

Most organizations won't be able to accomplish both setting meaningful standards and fulfilling the same. They will only do it until the leader who drove it moves on. Thus there is a need for some external force that keeps the pressure on – forever. Another good method is a customer council or board with real powers.

iv. Create an outside review process to approve guarantees, standards, redress policies, complaint systems, and the performance measurement processes associated with them.

Just as there is need for outside pressure, there is also need for an external body to review and approve standards, redress policies, and the rest. Otherwise, vague standards that cannot be measured and have no means of redress attached – “We will do our best to provide timely courteous service” – should be the norm. The review process should involve both customers (ideally through a customer council or board) and a neutral reinvention office such as the Charter Unit in UK. In the UK, the Labour Government required all departments to review their charters at least once every two years, whereas the Cabinet Office has set up an audit system to check on the quality of charters and intervene when necessary.

v. Publicize your standards, guarantees, redress policies, complaint systems, and results.

If people don't know about these policies, they will have far less effect than they should. E.g. the U.S. Postal Service has publicized its first-class-on-time delivery standards (three days within the continental U.S., one day locally) and reported quarterly on its performance. The results have generated front-page newspaper stories, creating useful urgency within top management.

The postal service, however, was found to be rather silent about another standard. “You will receive service at post office counters within five minutes.” If one looks hard next time one goes into a post office, they may find a tiny, 4-inch by 5-inch sign announcing the standard. But they might have probably never noticed it. As a result, it is meaningless to the customer. Nor does it seem to have any impact on employee behaviour, (as found by observations made). It is, sadly, a wasted opportunity to win over the public.

vi. Involve frontline employees in creating standards and other tools – and in figuring out how to meet them – to help them buy in.

If standards and redress policies are simply imposed on employees, few will respond to the challenge. The British also learned this lesson. Their review pointed out that frontline employee had “often been ignored in the past”. The government's guide, How to Draw up a National Charter, added, “They are the people who will have to deliver the standards in your charter, and they are often well placed to offer practical suggestions for improvements, and to identify people or organizations to be consulted.

vii. Empower frontline staff to make decisions.

When organizations fail to deliver the quality of service that they have promised or when customers have legitimate complaints, the frontline staff needs to be able to make it right, immediately. If you have to wait three weeks for management to make a decision, you will alienate your customers.

viii. Use standards, guarantees, complaints, and customer councils to redesign, reengineer, and restructure.

There's only so much improvement you can produce by changing attitudes and getting employees to work harder. If customer quality assurance don't lend to reengineering work processes and restructuring organizations, then it won't be worth using. Customer-driven agencies typically organize around customers' needs and organizational functions. They create single points contact for customers, one-stop services, and integrated work teams to handle all of a customer's needs.

ix. Study other organizations including private companies, to see how you might rethink, redesign, and reengineer.

Studying the best in business gets the organisation out of the box. It just opens up this whole world that you never even contemplated might be there.

x. Back up your quality assurance approach with training, mentoring, learning networks and other support for employees.

To improve customer service, your employees will need much more than “smile training”. They will need new skills, the ability to do customer surveys and focus groups; the ability to analyse, improve, and redesign work processes; the ability to build teams. There is a need to support them with training, expert consultants - even mentoring, learning networks and site visits.

xi. Don't create a separate unit to do this; integrate customer quality assurance into your strategic and performance management systems.

If a separate unit is created to handle service guarantees and standards, redress policies, and complaint procedures, then the line operations will see these things as headquarters' agenda, not their own. They may go through the motions, to comply, but they won't build their own work around customer service. There may be a need for a reinvention office to catalyse action, but development of standards and the like should be done by line organizations – with review by a reinvention office and customers. Standards must become an integral part of the strategic and performance management systems, like any other outcome goals and performance targets. It must not be treated as something separate from one's performance goals.

xii. Make sure your leadership is seriously committed.

To succeed, a commitment from the organisation's leaders including the top civil servants is a must.

Citizen's Charter – A Trouble-Shooting Guide

Nature of Problem

Limited awareness of the Charter among the public

Poor or inadequate consultations with stakeholders and lack of citizen involvement throughout the Charter cycle

Poor service delivery standards and under-performance

Inadequate feedback from citizens about quality of service, limiting the impact of the Charter.

Cause

- Absence of a planned approach to publicity
- Limited training and stakeholder involvement

- Charter treated as one among the many initiatives
- Bureaucratic style of functioning
- No systematic identification of stakeholders
- Lack of citizen friendly approach and absence of avenues for the stakeholders to interact or give feedback

- Poor complaint redressal systems
- Poor systems in place
- Outdated processes
- Staff not trained properly
- Centralisation
- Lack of transparency
- Communication failure
- Absence of systems to give feedback
- Lack of credibility and lack of confidence in the system

Solutions

- A holistic approach to publicity through press, electronic media and user involvement
- Meet the citizen programmes by the departments
- Change in the behaviour of the officers and staff through coaching, training and incentive systems
- Creating customer friendly environment in the offices
- Improved accessibility of officers and staff
- Training of staff at all levels
- Decentralization and delegation of authority
- Technology upgradation
- Process review and restructuring
- Customer confidence building measures sharing information and reports with users of the service
- Consultation committees. Welcoming negative feedback and removing fear from customers. Assurance that information from feedback will be used to improve services.

VIII CITIZEN'S CHARTERS - SOME BEST PRACTICES

The Union Ministry Personnel Public Grievances and Pensions in its efforts to provide more responsive and citizen-friendly governance coordinated the efforts to formulate and operationalise Citizen's Charters. The States of Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat became the most active participants to this concept by incorporating the charter in many departments and local bodies. The two case studies given below provide a cue to the increasing adherence to citizen-friendly governance in both these states. The case study of Regional Transport Department, Hyderabad, has been documented in a study done on Citizen's Charters by the Indian Express. The case study on Jan Sewa Kendras in Vadodara and Ahmedabad has been documented by the General Administration Department, Government of Gujarat.

Regional Transport Office, Hyderabad

The Regional Transport Offices have developed and implemented their Citizen's Charters that commit efficient service delivery as per standards specified. A sample of the service standards specified in the Citizen's Charter is given in the table below:

Item of work	Fees & Service Charges	Targeted/Response time
Driving licence		
• Learner's licence	Rs. 60	Same day
• Fresh driving licence	Rs. 390	Same day
Registration of new vehicles		
• 2-wheeler	Rs. 160	Same day
• 4-wheeler	Rs. 400	Same day
Issue/renewal of fitness certificate		
• Three wheelers	Rs. 230	Same day
• Light motor vehicles	Rs. 360	Same day
• Medium motor vehicles	Rs. 460	Same day
• Heavy motor vehicles	Rs. 560	Same day
Issue of duplicate registration certificate		
• Invalid carriages	Rs. 110	2 hours
• Motorcycles	Rs. 130	2 hours
• Light motor vehicles	Rs. 300	2 hours
Transfer of ownership		
• Invalid carriages	Rs. 110	Same day
• Motorcycles	Rs. 130	Same day
• Light motor vehicles	Rs. 300	Same day
Endorsement/termination of hire purchase in the RC		
• Motorcycle	Rs. 200	Same day
• Light motor vehicles	Rs. 300	Same day

In addition, the RTO has taken up a number of initiatives for citizen-friendly administration. These include:

- i. Simplification of procedures for registration and licensing;
- ii. Automation of services under the 'Fully Automated Services of Transport Department' – FAST – aimed at providing all transport department services through a comprehensive and networked solution;
- iii. Unit Offices headed by Motor Vehicle Inspectors have been created in the districts for work pertaining to new registration and licensing for decentralized service delivery nearer to the public;
- iv. Integrated check posts to provide checking facility to transport operators at one single point to avoid unnecessary delay and harassment;
- v. Ease of availability of forms and application – a token system has been introduced for orderly receipt and disposal of application;
- vi. Public assistance cells/help desks in every office to guide and assist in filling the forms and furnishing information about procedures;
- vii. Suggestion/Complaints boxes in every office in prescribed format.

Evaluation by the Media

A survey carried out by “The Indian Express” Hyderabad covering applicants for licenses, transfer certificates and fitness certificate applicants highlights the improved service delivery by the Officers of the R.T.O.

The findings of the survey brought forth the conclusion that: “There has been considerable improvement in the functioning of the Regional Transport Authority, though the time taken for processing and issue of certificates is not in accordance with the commitment made in the Citizens’ Charter, it has become faster than the earlier duration. The role of touts though not totally eradicated, has been minimised. There was widespread appreciation, specifically among parents about the measures being implemented by the department to check the condition of school buses. The department officials have become more responsive while attending to complaints and grievances. The response to enquiries, both online and telephonic, was comparatively prompt. Unlike in the past, the processing and procedures have been simplified. The department has become more transparent.”

Jan Sewa Kendra, Ahmedabad

The District Collectorate of Ahmedabad is a fine example of an administrative entity that has made a successful attempt to reengineer processes for better service delivery by using Citizen’s Charters and Jan Sewa Kendras.

In February 2004, the district administration of Ahmedabad standardised the entire Citizen’s Charter of the district which consisted of 75 issues ranging from land matters, issue of licenses and certificates, public distribution system, widow pension etc. All issues of the Citizen’s Charter were arranged in a concise and simple application format mentioning legal provisions, officers responsible for taking decisions, enclosures and annexures expected from the citizens, number of days required for disposal at each stage in the Collectorate and its subordinate offices etc. This simplified the range of services to be delivered by the district administration and established the basic standards for service delivery.

A parallel initiative was launched to reengineer the processes and standardize the application and query formats which facilitated the opening of a civic center, called Jan Sewa Kendra, for e-Governance with Citizen’s Charter as the main focus of service delivery. The concept of Jan Sewa Kendras was initiated by the Vadodara Collectorate in May 2003 as part of ‘one-day governance programme’ aimed at fast track issuance (same day) of certificates and affidavits, in the district and Taluk headquarters.

The main objectives of the Jan Seva Kendra are as follows:

- To bring transparency and speediness in administration through smooth procedures.
- To provide self-explanatory citizen friendly standardized formats of applications for all issues of the citizen charter and make them available online at Jan Seva Kendra and Taluka and Pranth headquarter.
- To implement ‘One-day Governance’ in issuing certificates and affidavits.
- To provide re-engineering of internal process and procedures with attitudinal change and higher motivational levels of employees.

The software used in the Jan Seva Kendra has been specially designed to include standardized citizen friendly and informative formats for all the 75 issues of the Collectorate citizen charter. It provides on the spot disposal of certain cases, online tracking of applications and grievances by citizens, information of the provisions related to every issue and the minimum number of days in which the application will be disposed off. The standardized formats are so designed that a citizen can fill it up himself without seeking the help of touts or middlemen. Each application is transmitted online to the concerned department of the Collectorate and is monitored online by the district headquarter, sub-divisional and the Taluka headquarters. Related internal improvements such as level jumping, query formats, coding of applications etc. have also been done. 50% data entry operators in the Jan Seva Kendra are persons from the physically disabled category. The Jan Seva Kendra hopes to become a one-stop location for all citizens, catering to effective implementation and monitoring of the citizen’s charter and quick disposal of grievances.

The benefits that have accrued from the implementation of citizen's charters and the Jan Sewa Kendras pertain to better service delivery, quicker turnaround time, reduced interface of citizens with government officials and better productivity.

The state has accepted the public private partnership model of the Vadodara and Ahmedabad Jan Sewa Kendras for replication in other districts. Jan Sewa Kendras are already functional in 15 district headquarters and 122 Taluks. The government intends to cover all districts and Taluks by the end of the financial year. All the centres in the State have been prescribed a uniform logo and design. The services/facilities to be provided by these centres are to be on the same pattern throughout the State.

The main lesson to be learnt is that improving service delivery cannot be achieved in a simplistic manner. The Citizen's Charter and e-Governance can become successful tools of better service delivery only if it is accompanied by a complete overhaul of internal procedures/processes/systems/file movements and attitudinal change. Therefore, each time e-governance is introduced, it must not be done in a hurry, but time must be taken to see that the systems and people are made compatible with the speed, transparency and precision that accompany it.

Bureaucratic Transformation: A Case Study of the UK Passport Office

Britain followed an aggressive unbundling-the-state during the 1980s and 1990s. A transformation was engineered in the British civil service via scrutiny exercises, financial management initiative, formation of executive agencies, and the proclamation of citizen's charters. An interesting example of this transformation was the British passport service.

Before 1991, the passport services were provided by the Passport Office, known for its slow and uncommunicative service and a somewhat remote and austere image. It processed over 3.5 million passports a year and handled thousands of enquiries. In 1998 the passport service was computerized and in 1991 the Passport Office was turned into an executive agency called the Passport Agency.

The Passport Agency had two main targets, namely, improved customer service and improved financial performance. For instance, the 1993-94 target was to process applications in 20 working days or less during the peak demand period, and 10 working days during the rest of the year. In 1993-94 the agency targeted 3% reduction in overall cash operating unit cost. There were other concrete targets relating to time to respond to letters and waiting time for customers in passport offices in Britain. The agency mostly was able to meet the targets.

During the 1990s a number of steps were taken to improve the functioning of this service agency:

- i. It identified several key areas for improvement, such as service to customers by post, over the phone, during personal visits; customer satisfaction; detection of passport fraud; wastage; efficiency as measured by passports per staff member; and financial performance. Concrete targets in each of these areas were specified in the agency's annual corporate plan sent by the agency to the relevant government minister for approval;
- ii. Performance against targets was monitored through reports generated by the agency's management information system. The reports were reviewed by the head of operations with the heads of individual passport offices. Regular monthly meetings were held between the head of operations and regional managers, and an operations manager was appointed in each office to ensure that the office met its targets and standards;
- iii. Regular customer opinion surveys were conducted. For instance, in the early 1990s, 50,000 customer survey questionnaires were issued. The return indicated a very high level of satisfaction. Such surveys were also made by regional passport offices;
- iv. Many actions were taken to improve customer service. These included name badges for frontline staff, standard clothing for counter staff, much better reception and other

services, special facilities for people with disabilities, improvement in telephone enquiry service, and comprehensive customer-care training for frontline staff. In the mid-1990s an effective complaints redressal procedure was being developed, and a panel of passport users was being set up to advise the agency on service-related issues;

- v. The agency invested considerably in effective human resource management. Personnel management responsibilities were developed in regional offices, and training in the offices was spurred by the appointment of training officers. Managers in each office were familiarized with production management techniques through training courses. A house journal was started to improve communications.

It is remarkable what a flurry of changes and innovations could be institutionalized in the Passport Office in just three or four years after it underwent a status change from a department of the government to an excellent agency with two clear mandates; improve financial performance, and serve the citizen/customer better.

A weak service is a major and frequent bane of most government organizations, particularly monopoly organizations. The Citizen's Charter movement in Britain sought to attack this disability frontally.

Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, Chennai

The Citizen's Charter of the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board was issued, with the approval of the Government of Tamil Nadu on 16th April, 1998. With a view to ensuring that the assurances given in the Citizen's Charter are adhered to by the Board, a Consumer Committee named "Metrowater Citizen's Charter Review and Consumer Service Committee" headed by and comprising leading consumer activists as members was formed. The composition of the Committee is as under:-

- (a) Chairman - One of the leading activists in Public and Consumer Affairs who has played an active role in public grievances redressal or social work;
- (b) Vice-Chairman - The Executive Director of the Board and Convener
- (c) Members -
 - Six members drafted from Consumer Forums/Non-Governmental/Social/Service Organisations.
 - Three Official Members from among Area Engineers (representing North, South and Central Chennai circles of the Board).

The Committee has the following functions:-

- (i) To discuss, deliberate upon and review the subjects connected with 'Citizen's Charter' and public grievances redressal system and issue necessary guidelines/instructions to ensure adherence to the same.
- (ii) To identify the problems of the officials/consumers in implementing the 'Citizen's Charter' and give suitable advice in overcoming it.
- (iii) To identify the lapses, if any, in adherence to the Citizen's Charter and advice remedial suitable action.
- (iv) To identify the new items to be included in the Citizen's Charter or any existing items to be deleted from the Citizen's Charter to make the document an ideal one to suit public requirements.
- (v) Any other subjects connected therewith and entrusted to them by the Board.

The Committee was initially set up for a period of one year. Its tenure, however, has been extended on a year to year basis. One of the findings of the Committee was that 98.5% of the services of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board have been in conformity with the declared standards given in the Citizen's Charter. Hence, the Committee advised that in view of the higher capabilities of the Board, certain standards could be further raised. Accordingly, the Board brought out a modified Citizen's Charter in the year 2000 assuring that it would perform and render its services as per the commitments and well within the prescribed time limits.

Other practices initiated by the Board include:-

- (i) Open House Meetings in all area offices and depot offices on all second Saturdays of the month with representatives of voluntary organizations, consumer action groups, resident associations and other interested groups / members of the general public concerned. These meetings have helped the Board to establish more informal contacts with its consumers and have enabled the Board to identify lapses, if any, in adherence to the commitments given in the Charter.
- (ii) Weekly reports on adherence to standards committed in the Charter are being reviewed by the Managing Director and also published in the “Cheithi Madal”, an in-house journal of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board which is being supplied to NGOs/ Councils and other stakeholders.
- (iii) Information and Facilitation Counters have been opened in the Area Offices where an Area Information and Facilitation Officer (AIFO) has been posted to ensure that the members of the public/customers visiting the area offices get assistance for various services at one counter itself. A register is maintained at the reception with the following columns:-

Receptionist Register/Information Cell Register

Sl. No.	Date	Time	Name & Address of the Visitor Phone No.	Purpose of the Visit	Details of Queries O&M/ others if any	Information transferred to	Follow up action	Initial of the AIFO	Weekly Scrutiny by Area Engineer
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Citizen’s Charter in all Municipalities/Corporations in Tamil Nadu

The Government of Tamil Nadu and Commissionerate of Municipal Administration have formulated Citizen’s Charter for urban local bodies. The Charter of each local body provides that if grievances are not redressed in time as stipulated in the Charter, citizens are entitled to bring it to the notice of the officers concerned and also to the Commissionerate whose telephone numbers have been indicated in the Charter. Instructions are also issued to all the Executive Authorities of Corporations for collecting a fine of Rs.50/- per day per job from the staff concerned of the Corporation and given to the affected public concerned (for example, for delayed issue of licence / permission/certificates).

Citizen’s Charter of Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board

The Charter brought out by the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board is unique as it has incorporated a provision on payment of compensation as a token of commitment to its customers in the event of failure to provide services within the stipulated time norms, e.g.,:-

According to the Charter, “new water supply and sewerage connections are supposed to be sanctioned or rejected within a period of 30 working days, and in the event of failure to issue sanction order within 30 working days, the customer will be paid a token amount of Rs.20/- and will be issued a fresh date of not more than 15 days hence. If the Board fails to provide the response even within the extended time, the customer will again be paid Rs.20/- and the Managing Director (Technical) of the Board will personally meet such customer to explain the reasons for delay.”

IX LIST OF WEBSITES & SUGGESTED READINGS

National Sites

To refer to Citizen’s Charters of various Ministries/Departments/Organisations of Government of India and State Governments please check the sites mentioned below:

goicharters.nic.in

darpp.nic.in

praja.org

[trulbs.org/tambaram/info/citizen's charter/html](http://trulbs.org/tambaram/info/citizen's%20charter/html)

maharashtra.gov.in

<http://persmin.nic.in/arpq/welcome.html>

<http://goidirectory.nic.in/>

Books

“Inducing Client Focus in Bureaucracy – The Citizen’s Charters in India” Aravinda K. Sharma & Indu Sharma, Indian Institute of , New Delhi 2002

“*Reports on Implementation of Citizen’s Charters*”, Consumer Co-ordination Council, New Delhi, 1989, 1997, 1998

International Sites

<http://www.ti-bangladesh.org/ti-india/documents/charter/ccsum.pdf>

http://www.ukonline.gov.uk/QuickFind/ResourceGuidesMenu/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4000963&chk=Ulp2oI

http://www.ukonline.gov.uk/QuickFind/ResourceGuidesMenu/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4000952&chk=ydbzml

http://www.ukonline.gov.uk/QuickFind/AZCentralGovernment/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=1001001&chk=CdYlij

<http://www.ukonline.gov.uk/Home/Homepage/fs/en>

<http://www.surf-as.org/Papers/Citizen's%20Charters%20Jan02.pdf>

<http://www.apsc.gov.au/charters/international.htm>

<http://www.benchmarking.gov.uk>

Online Readings

Customer Focus

1. A Glossary of Customer Service Terms, produced by the Institute of Customer Service as part of the Awards procedure, that may be helpful for anyone involved with this area is available at:

http://www.instituteofcustomerservice.com/res/pdf/200377135423_Glossary%20of%20ICS%20Terms.pdf

2. Information relating to the topics related to customer feedback/satisfaction can be downloaded from the OPSR website at

<http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/page261.asp>

3. The following link provides an example of a central government policy document produced by the HM Land Registry:

http://www.landreg.gov.uk/publications/other/cust_surv/csurv_pol.pdf

The Customer Service Toolkit

1. Australia

<http://www.service.wa.gov.au/overview/index.htm>

2. Canada

The Canadian Government has been working to enhance customer focus through its Citizens First initiatives. Links to useful sources of information relating to these are listed below:

3. Service Improvement Toolkit - Toolbox

http://www.cio-dpi.gc.ca/si-as/tools-outils/tools-outilstb_e.asp

Case Studies

http://www.cio-dpi.gc.ca/si-as/serv-standards/exempl/exempltb_e.asp

Service Standards

- Examples

http://www.cio-dpi.gc.ca/si-as/serv_standards/literature/literaturetb_e.asp

- **Literature Search**

http://www.cio-dpi.gc.ca/si-as/serv-standards/literature/literature07_e.asp

- Guidance on how to develop service standards and case studies

http://www.cio-dpi.gc.ca/si-as/serv-standards/literature/literaturetb_e.asp

- A Compendium of Service Standards

http://www.cio-dpi.gc.ca/si-as/serv-standards/compendium/compendiumtb_e.asp

United States

Information about the work undertaken to enhance customer focus amongst American public sector organisations in the late 1990s is available at:

<http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/custserv/1997/chapter1.pdf>

[Information relating to the American Customer Satisfaction Index \(ACSI\) used by both government agencies and companies to compare their performance is available at: http://www.theacsi.org/overview.htm](http://www.theacsi.org/overview.htm)

Customer Relationship Management

<http://www.localegov.gov.uk/page.cfm?pageID=484&Language=eng>

The above link provides information on:

- clarifying what CRM means in the public sector;
- explaining how and when to exploit CRM;
- implementing CRM in local government; and
- explaining how CRM fits in with other elements of e-government.

Customer Satisfaction

Managing Expectations

“*Satisfaction with public services: A Discussion Paper*”, the Performance and Innovation Unit.

Available at:

www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/innovation/projects/satisfaction.shtml

“*Customer-focused Government – from policy to delivery*”, the Public Services Productivity Panel.

Available at:

www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pspp

“Can’t get no satisfaction? – Using a gap approach to measure service quality”, Accounts Commission for Scotland, June 2000.

This can be downloaded from:

www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/index/00m02ac.asp

Measurement

A list of useful tips to bear in mind when developing customer surveys and “75 Painful Questions About Your Customer Satisfaction”.

Available at:

http://www.qmconsulting.nl/artikelen/Artikel_75%20painful.htm

Complaint Handling

A list of “Golden Rules of Complaint Handling” developed by Trading Standards in South Tyneside.

Available at:

<http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/southtyneside/business/care.htm>

Guidance on handling complaints produced by the NHS.

Available at: www.doh.gov.uk/nhscomplaintsreform/listening.htm

Awards

Charter Mark

The Charter Mark website provides those in public service with a self-assessment toolkit, information on the benefits of Charter Mark accreditation for both organisations and their customers, and the Charter Mark Holder’s Directory.

<http://www.chartermark.gov.uk/holders/holders.htm>

Benchmarking Information

National Audit Office

“Using call centres to deliver public services”, Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC 134 Session 2002-2003, 11th December 2002.

This is available at: http://www.nao.gov.uk/publications/nao_reports/02-03/0203134.pdf

APPENDIX 1

Citizen’s Charter: An Action Guide

	Sl. No.	Action Areas	Completion Dates
1		Display of the Charter at the entrance of all offices.	
2		Display of information board at all offices of the Department.	
3		Wearing of name badges by all staff and particularly by those at the service delivery counters.	
4		Specific time slots to be allotted to receive and settle consumer grievances at the offices.	
5		The Charter size to be standardised to a booklet of half of A/4 size. Titles to appear in font size 14 and matter in font size 11.	
6		Local language translations of the Charter to be made available to the public.	

- 7 All employees dealing with the public to have a copy of the Charter readily available.
 - 8 Stakeholder Meetings to be held at least once in two months and minutes of the meeting to be made and acted upon.
 - 9 Presentation of Annual Performance Report to the user groups by the Senior Management.
 - 10 Charter to be revised with enhanced service delivery standards periodically (say once in a year).
 - 11 Exit polls to be conducted to measure service satisfaction levels of the users.
 - 12 Charter awareness drive to be taken up by mentioning the existence of the Charter on the output-stationery printed for the users of the service/services.
 13. Citizen's Charter Advisory Committees to be formed with stakeholders in each office/unit/division.
 - 14 MIS on service delivery parameters mentioned in the Citizen's Charters and a periodical review. Such information to be shared with user groups.
 - 15 Complaint Boxes and Suggestion Boxes to be kept at all offices. Complaints/ Suggestions to be documented.
 - 16 Charter to be put on the website of the department. Complaints to be received through websites of the department/call centres.
 - 17 Call centres to be used for receiving complaints and for providing information to the citizens.
-
- 18 A comprehensive list of neighbourhood groups, consumer associations, *mahila mandals*, citizens' groups, ward welfare associations, etc., to be maintained in all offices for periodical interaction and consultations with the public. Through press notification individuals interested in participating in such meetings to be listed.
-
- 19 Identification of training needs:
 - a) Cutting Edge Staff; b) Middle Management; c) Senior Management.
 - 20 Identification of a Nodal Officer for Citizen's Charter work in the department.
 - 21 Availability of officers to the public during a fixed time slot.
-
- 22 Provision for "login" and "logout" date and time to be made in the computer system for forms/documents/applications received by the department for processing/issue of certificates/licenses.
-
- 23 Citizens' Feedback forms to be kept at the service delivery counters. Feedback received to be analysed for corrective action. Feedback through Call Centres/ Website/e-mail/Telephone to be encouraged

APPENDIX 2

A Model Citizen's Charter Feedback Form for use by Departments

Your Suggestions and Comments are Important to us

Department :

Address :

Telephone Number :

e-Mail :

We are committed to give you good service and also constantly improve our services. However, at times our best intentions and efforts may not be good enough.

Your feedback will help us in our efforts.

We thank you for your response. (Please tick mark on your choice)

1. Overall, how do you rate our service?

a) Excellent b) Very good c) Good d) Fair e) Poor

2. How do you rate our service delivery standards in the Citizen's Charter?

a) Excellent b) Very good c) Good d) Fair e) Poor

3. Against these standards how did we perform?

a) Excellent b) Very good c) Good d) Fair e) Poor

4. How do you rate the service standard at "MAY I HELP YOU" counters?

a) Excellent b) Very good c) Good d) Fair e) Poor

5. How do you rate our billing and accounts service?

a) Excellent b) Very good c) Good d) Fair e) Poor

6. How do you rate the staff in respect of:

i) Courtesy:

a) Excellent b) Very good c) Good d) Fair e) Poor

ii) Promptness:

a) Excellent b) Very good c) Good d) Fair e) Poor

7. Please provide positive or negative feedback on the staff manning the counters

(Please mention their names and designations)

If you have comments or suggestions, please send them to the address below:

Signature

Your Name

Telephone No. and e-Mail

Address of the Department:

APPENDIX 3

Citizen's Charter Score Card

Has your Department published a Charter? Does your Department have a Charter?

This is a self-score card for you. Are the following happening? Be self critical and fair.

This is not just a Score Card. It is also a Route Map.

Ask the following questions:

1. Where are you now? (on a scale of 0 to 100)

2. Where do you want to go?
3. How will you do it? And when will you do it? What will you do?
4. Where do you want to reach? (on a scale of 0 to 100)
5. When will you reach? (Time frame)

APPENDIX 4
Citizen's Charter Survey
A Model Form for Conducting a Survey

Name of the Citizen

Date

Address

Department & Location

1. Purpose of the visit to the Department:-
2. Kindly indicate your general impression of the Department/Office

S. No	Details	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
1	Neatness & Cleanliness					
2	Courteous & Citizen Friendly Staff					

3. Are you aware of Citizen's Charter of the Department? Yes/No

4. Is Citizen's Charter displayed at the Department/Office (Tick appropriately)

Not seen	Displayed	Displayed clear	Displayed but prominently	Any Comment not very

5. Did you receive service as mentioned in the Charter of the Department?
 (Standards and time frame) Yes/No

6. How do you rate the service rendered by the Department

Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor

7. Is there a Helpdesk at the Office? Yes/No

8. If yes, did you approach the Helpdesk? Yes/No

9. How do you rate the Helpdesk/May I Help You Counter?

Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor

10. Was your problem/grievance solved/redressed?

Yes	No	Still pending	Not satisfied

11. Mention the number of days or time taken by the department to solve/redress your problem/ grievance?

12. What is your overall rating of the Department on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest) please tick your reply in the box

a) 1 and 2 b) 3 to 5 c) 6 d) 7 e) 8 f) 9 g)

Pre Citizen's Charter Era

1. Bureaucratic
2. People Oriented
3. Citizen uncared for; Indifferent treatment; Discourtesy.
4. Staff driven/Rules driven
5. Low or no priority for customer service and customer satisfaction.
6. Officers/Staff not accessible
7. No standards; No accountability; Vague or unquantifiable standards.
8. No transparency; Information hidden from public.
9. Secrecy; Discretion; Favouritism; Corruption.
10. Indifferent to customer/Citizen's complaints; Delay in redressal.
11. Promise and promises

10

Post Citizen's Charter Era

Citizen Centric

People Oriented

Courtesy; Helpful service; welcome reception.

Citizen focused and Citizen driven

High priority for customer service and customer satisfaction.

Officers/Staff easily accessible and willing to listen.

Well defined standards of service clear and measurable. Publication of performance against these standards.

Information shared with public

Transparent systems

Good complaints processing system. Compensation to citizens for deficiency in service.

Concrete steps

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- a) 1 and 2 b) 3 to 5 c) 6 d) 7 e) 8 f) 9 g) 10

Citizen's Charters – A Handbook

A Publication of the Government of India

Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions
Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances

New Delhi, India

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Transparency + Accountability + Citizen Friendliness

Citizen's Charter

Good Governance is the Technology
Citizen's Charter is the Tool

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**MINISTER OF STATE FOR
PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES & PENSIONS
AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS
GOVT. OF INDIA**

MESSAGE

The “Handbook on Citizens’ Charter”, brought out by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public grievances lucidly explains various aspects of Citizens Charters and details initiatives taken by the Government of India, State Governments and UT Administrations in formulation and implementation of Citizens’ Charters. The Handbook, is intended to, serve as a guide in formulation and implementation of Citizens’ Charter and other citizen-centric initiatives, to Organizations under the Central Government, the State Governments and the Union Territory Administrations. The Handbook, would also prove useful for training institutes in devising suitable training modules for capacity building of Government employees in this crucial area.

I wish the endeavour a success.

with regards,

(SURESH PACHOURI)

102, North Block, New Delhi - 110001 Phone : 23092475/3901 Fax : 23092716

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