Customers Come First – Lessons from Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA)

A Service Charter is a public document that notifies clients about a Ministry, Department and Agency’s (MDA) services, and outlines public rights and responsibilities, as well as relevant platforms for communicating with the MDA. It outlines Service Delivery standards through a series of commitments, entitlements, or promises, through which customers can expect and demand quality service as a right, and have their complaints addressed if services are not satisfactory. The charter describes services provided by the MDA, service pledges describing the general quality of service delivery that customers should expect, expectations to be treated by staff with openness, fairness, courtesy, and professionalism, and outlines service standards (or service delivery targets) for key aspect of a service, such as timeliness, access and accuracy.

LAWMA Service Charter

Professional, Efficient and Sustainable Services: LAWMA’s Service Charter

In its Service Charter, LAWMA promises to “provide a professional, efficient and sustainable waste management and disposal service to the generality of Lagosians, corporate bodies and Governments (Local and State) in Lagos State”. To achieve this mission, LAWMA outlined four key vision statements. They are:

- To provide unprecedented efficient waste management services to all domestic, industrial and commercial clients;
- To ensure adequate provision of waste receptacles as an alternative to indiscriminate waste dumping;
- To ensure adequate public enlightenment/education for reorientation on decent waste collection and disposal habits; and
- To ensure effective partnership with the private sector and other stakeholders in waste management.

Key Achievements against Service Charter pledges:

- Increased coverage of the entire state through partnership with over 777 Private Sector Participant (PSP) operators in waste collection and disposal, covering all 377 political wards in Lagos State;
- Increased revenue generated for Lagos State Government and PSP operators;
- Twenty Five thousand (25,000) direct and indirect jobs created;
- Increased profile and visibility of LAWMA as a household name and trusted service provider in waste collection and management.

Public Private Partnership Increased Coverage

LAWMA formed partnerships with the private sector to improve service delivery, share risks and increase its investment portfolio. Four types of contractual agreements exist in the agency, and 777 companies participate in financing, designing, implementing and operating infrastructure facilities and services without compromising quality and standard of outputs. A total of 422 private sector companies are franchised while 344 are in contractual partnership providing waste collection and disposal services across Lagos’ 377 political wards. Eleven companies out of the 422 have concession agreements and are involved in Recycling and Transfer Loading Station (TLS) services. All these companies were engaged by LAWMA through competitive tendering.

Increased Revenue through Improved Service Delivery

LAWMA was able to increase its revenue generation over the three year period by 241% from N3.116 billion to N7.5 billion between 2013 and July 2015. The increase was largely due to improved billing, more clients paying and easier payment processes in banks, better coverage of the metropolis, increase in the number of service provided which include industrial and medical waste.
More and better services have led to new jobs

LAWMA has provided jobs for many Lagosians over the years. The agency hires street sweepers, mechanics, tailors and truck drivers in support of its activities. Many people, especially women, have been engaged as truck drivers, waste collectors and street sweepers by LAWMA or the PSPs.

“...There are also 180 companies registered for road sweeping and these companies engaged more than 15,000 street sweepers.” Mr. Ola Oresanya, former Managing Director, LAWMA

Customer Information and Access

LAWMA embarked on mass media campaigns using both radio and TV media. Since the Service Charter launch, the agency funds 17 programmes in English, Yoruba and Pidgin English. The programmes have a phone-in component which allows clients to interact with officials, especially the customer care staff or regional managers. Through these interactions with its clients, customer friendly practices were promoted. In 2012, LAWMA formally instituted and created a Customer Care Centre with dedicated staff and toll free telephone numbers. Since then, it has worked hard at making sure that client access to the agency has significantly improved.

Clients are encouraged to reach the agency through the state offices, the website, and dedicated toll free telephone lines for complaints, suggestions, observations and advices. To aid the access, LAWMA installed a complete customer relation management software (PABX), set up a dedicated customer care office and computerized receipt of all complaints to maintain a log of complaints. The team analyzes the complaints weekly, and supervisors randomly check on complaints by calling or visiting complainers to find out if their complaints have been resolved.

Role of SPARC in Lagos Service Charter Implementation

SPARC provided technical support to develop the Service Charter Policy and Guidelines, and supported the actual development of Charter documents for the 14 first phase pilot MDAs, among which was the Lagos State Waste Management Agency (LAWMA). The MDAs began implementation of their charters by setting up Service Delivery Units (SDUs), staffed with a Service Delivery Officer (SDO) and a Service Improvement Officer (SIO), who are responsible for ensuring quality service delivery to citizens, and for putting in place a functional redress mechanism. The Office of Transformation, Creativity and Innovation regularly conducts impact assessments to review implementation progress across the MDAs.

Challenges

Staff noted that the main challenge in meeting LAWMA’s service improvement plan is the timely provision and release of funds to support the PSPs in logistics. This is often a critical issue because most of LAWMA’s partners are small scale entrepreneurs with limited access to finance. Though the state is supportive of LAWMA’s activities, the agency requires additional funds to continue to educate the public through mass media campaigns, to provide safety equipment to its staff and partners, and to conduct routine health screening for all waste handlers.

Lessons learned

The Customer Care team learned that though responding to each complaint is better done through personal interaction with clients, automating the calls and recording them to respond to later, provided the team more time to answer each call and give customers the extra attention they needed. This also meant that fewer staff were needed to manage the Customer Complaints Desk, leading to more efficient services that translate to savings for LAWMA customers. The team also learned that continuous training is needed to equip staff to promptly respond to unsatisfied clients (through a decentralized system).

The team noted that the areas that need improvement include reviewing the current service charter and increasing client and stakeholder participation in the review process.

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