

CASE STUDY

CFI Group Helps BCA Better Manage a Multi-Channel Customer Experience

About BCA

The **Bureau of Consular Affairs (BCA)** is the public face of the U.S. Department of State for millions of people who work and travel abroad. BCA is responsible for the welfare and protection of U.S. citizens abroad, for the issuance of passports and other documentation to U.S. citizens and nationals, and for the protection of U.S. border security and the facilitation of legitimate travel to the United States. BCA also has a significant domestic presence, most notably the 29 U.S. Passport agencies and centers, 27 of which deal directly with the U.S. public. BCA has over 7500 domestic passport acceptance facilities that accept passports on behalf of the department, which consist of the U.S. Postal Service, universities, libraries and circuit courts.

BCA's vast consular activities have broad foreign policy and domestic political implications and involve serious legal, humanitarian, and management concerns. Responsibility for these functions is vested within the Department of State in the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs and for their implementation abroad in consular officers assigned to embassies and consulates abroad. BCA is also the Department's largest Bureau in terms of domestic personnel and is almost entirely funded through revenue generated by consular fees. This revenue totaled \$4.16 billion in 2015, making BCA the equivalent of a Fortune 600 company.

The Challenge

The Mission of Passport Services is to issue secure travel documents to U.S. citizens while providing the highest level

Challenge

BCA must manage a multi-channel customer experience, maintain the high standards set forth in the mission statement, and respond to increasingly high customer expectations, all while meeting record setting demand.

Solution

- CFI Group assisted BCA in collecting and analyzing feedback, clarifying what was most important to citizens, and focusing resources to improve overall satisfaction.
- In 2017, BCA worked with CFI Group to conduct focus groups to gain critical feedback on upcoming changes for simplifying the process.

Results

- ✓ Careful and consistent monitoring has helped the agency maintain a CSI score that far exceeds federal government benchmarks.
- ✓ Specific initiatives, such as the "Picture Perfect Passport" campaign, were launched in direct response to feedback from the survey respondents.

of customer service, professionalism, and integrity. Fulfilling this mission poses unprecedented challenges due to ever increasing demand and the high customer service bar set by the private sector.

In 2017, BCA issued a record setting 21,378,994 U.S. passports through its extensive network. In addition to this network of agencies, centers, and facilities customers have the option to contact the National Passport Information Center or access travel.state.gov to provide comments, complaints, or feedback. As such, BCA is faced with the challenge of managing this multi-channel customer experience, maintaining the high standards set forth in the mission statement, and responding to increasingly high customer expectations while meeting record setting demand.

The Solution

Some of the challenges that BCA faces requires a multi-faceted approach. Commitment from BCA leadership, a dedicated staff, up-to-date technology and a strong feedback loop are needed to achieve the desired results. To meet the need for a strong feedback loop, BCA works with CFI Group on a number of different initiatives that provide citizen feedback on a regular basis.

Beginning in 2006, BCA Passport partnered with CFI Group to implement a survey of recent passport applicants to obtain feedback on their customer service experiences. Using a customized American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) approach, CFI Group assisted BCA in not only collecting feedback, but analyzing it in a way that clarified what was most important to citizens and how to focus resources to improve overall satisfaction.

Using the results from the annual CFI Group survey, BCA implemented changes to improve the overall customer experience. To meet increasing demand, significant changes to the application process were being considered for launch in 2018. Specifically, a limited online renewal process was scheduled to be implemented. In addition, BCA was considering the concept of push notifications for applicants and a National Passport Awareness Campaign. As the details of these initiatives were being finalized, BCA recognized the value of obtaining citizen feedback. To gain a deep and thorough understanding of citizen reactions to these initiatives, BCA chose to conduct focus groups using a qualitative approach in four markets across the country in the fall of 2017. U.S. citizens who applied for a passport within a six-month time frame as well as prospective applicants were invited to participate in the focus groups.

In 2017, BCA launched an ongoing call center survey to measure wait times, holds, transfers, ease and use of the IVR (Interactive Voice Response) system, and customer service representatives. Citizens are invited to participate in a brief survey after completing their call to NPIC. NPIC survey provides valuable feedback on how well the NPIC is servicing callers. The survey is available in both English and Spanish. Quarterly reports provide up-to-date performance metrics that can be used to manage the call center and serves as feedback for contact center personnel. NPIC has maintained a score of 90 and compares quite favorably to other federal contact center benchmarks as well as private sector contact center benchmarks.

The Results

Over the years, feedback from literally thousands of passport applicants has helped BCA Passport monitor the agency's performance and ensure a high level of customer service. Metrics related to the application process, staff proficiency, the quality of service and complaints are among the performance measures tracked annually. This careful and consistent monitoring has helped the agency maintain a (Customer Satisfaction Index) CSI score that far exceeds federal government benchmarks.

In 2017, the annual survey results were supplemented with feedback from focus groups, which provided valuable insight into how applicants would likely react to upcoming changes to simplify the process. Based on the feedback obtained, changes were made to increase awareness at outreach events to educate communities on resources available to them and how to apply for a passport. BCA also launched several social media outlets to communicate to a broader audience and respond to customer inquiries regarding general passport information and services.

A media campaign was launched in 2016, "Picture Perfect Passport," that aided applicants in taking their own picture using the online application picture template. An online application completion process was made available for customers with a unique 2D barcode that saved customers time and money. These are just a few initiatives that were initiated based on feedback from customers who participated in CFI Group-conducted surveys in an effort to provide BCA a better understanding of customer needs and preferences.

BCA ranked among the top ranking federal agencies for their CSI score, according to the annual ACSI Federal Government Report 2017. BCA's CSI score has consistently been 80 or above over the past several years, higher than the average government score of 69.7. Combined with NPIC call center score, BCA continues to demonstrate remarkable customer service.