ForeSee Study Highlights Social Media Best Practices for the Federal Government

Accompanying ACSI Report Shows Federal Websites Maintain High Customer Satisfaction and Transparency Ratings

Ann Arbor, Mich. (October 25, 2011)—Customer experience analytics firm ForeSee today released its report on the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) Quarterly E-Government Satisfaction Index, including an analysis of the state of social media in the federal government. ForeSee’s audit of social media activity in the federal government identified clear themes and best practices, showing that the public sector is learning to communicate with citizens in ways not usually associated with government services.

ForeSee conducted an expert usability review of the 15 executive department websites in order to gauge how many participate in social media and how they do it. All are participating in the three most popular social platforms—Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube—and many are using other new media and communications tools, from Flickr and podcasts to email newsletters and RSS feeds.

“Social media is no longer a nice to have but a necessity in both the private sector and the public sector. It’s just the way people communicate now,” said Larry Freed, president and CEO of ForeSee and author of Managing Forward: How to Move from Measuring the Past to Managing the Future. “The good news is that federal departments are participating in social media; the bad news is that efforts are happening at a variety of levels, and the effect can be muddled for citizens.”

Several clear themes and best practices emerging from the research are included in the report and can serve as useful guidance for other federal, state, and local governments. When government agencies adhere to the best practices that make their sites easier for citizens to use, citizen satisfaction increases, as does transparency and trust. Studies show that when satisfaction increases, citizens are more likely to use the website as opposed to other, costlier channels.

Today’s report also includes the third quarter update of the ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index, a report that has been issued every quarter since 2003. Overall, satisfaction with federal government websites remains at 75 on the ACSI’s 100-point scale. Citizen satisfaction has
remained at 75 or higher since late 2009 (with only one exception in the second quarter of 2010, when satisfaction fell briefly to 74.7). Today’s report represents more than 270,000 citizen surveys and includes scores for 100 federal government sites, all on a 100-point scale, so that comparisons can be made between sites over time.

“Customer satisfaction is a moving target that requires continual adjustment to changing circumstances,” said Professor Claes Fornell of the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business and head of the ACSI. “Whether it is government or business, achieving high satisfaction requires responsiveness to consumer tastes, preferences, and even how they communicate, and part of that is effective use of social media.”

Today’s report also contains the ForeSee Online Transparency Index, which provides a consistent measure of online transparency and quantifies its impact on citizens’ attitudes and behaviors for 36 federal websites. In aggregate, transparency increases one point to 77, which is an all-time high for the category.

A full list of individual website scores along with more discussion of social media trends and best practices is available in the Q3 2011 ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index, available for free download at www.ForeSee.com.

ABOUT FORESEE
As a pioneer in customer experience analytics, ForeSee continuously measures satisfaction across customer touch points and delivers critical insights on where to prioritize improvements for maximum impact. Because ForeSee’s superior technology and proven methodology connect the customer experience to the bottom line, executives and managers are able to drive future success by confidently optimizing the efforts that will achieve business and brand objectives. The result is better business for companies and a better experience for consumers. Visit www.ForeSee.com for customer experience solutions and original research.

ABOUT THE ACSI
The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is the only uniform, national, cross-industry measure of satisfaction with the quality of goods and services available in the United States. In 1999, the federal government selected ACSI to be a standard metric for measuring citizen satisfaction. Over 130 federal government agencies have used ACSI to measure citizen satisfaction with more than 200 services and programs. The Index was founded at the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business and is produced by ACSI LLC. ForeSee Results sponsors the E-Government Index.

ABOUT THE FEDERAL CONSULTING GROUP
The Federal Consulting Group (FCG) operates as a fee-for-service franchise in the National Business Center (Dept. of the Interior) and serves as the executive agent in the government for the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). The Federal Consulting Group uses a generic clearance from the Office of Management and Budget to obtain expedited approval of
ACSI surveys as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act. This enables agencies to conduct
ACSI surveys without obtaining a separate clearance. Agencies can assess and improve
programs, call centers and websites using the ACSI methodology through an Interagency
Agreement with the Federal Consulting Group.

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