E-Government Satisfaction Remains Strong, According to ACSI and ForeSee

Federal News & Information Websites Exceed Private Sector Counterparts, Bucking Trend of Lagging Satisfaction

ANN ARBOR, Mich. (October 23, 2012) – Despite a slight dip in the third quarter, citizen satisfaction with federal government websites remains near record highs, according to the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) E-Government Satisfaction Index, released today in partnership with customer experience analytics firm ForeSee. After setting an all-time high in the second quarter, the ACSI e-government index slips 0.4 percent to 75.3 on a 100-point scale.

Federal government websites have long lagged their private sector counterparts in customer satisfaction, but a recent slide for the e-business sector breaks the trend, and satisfaction with e-government (75.3) now exceeds satisfaction with private-sector e-business (74.2 in the ACSI annual report on the sector released in July 2012). However, satisfaction with e-government is still far behind private sector e-commerce, which scored 80.1 in the E-Commerce annual report published in February 2012.

“When evaluating their online experience, customer expectations are no different for public or private sector websites. As far as they are concerned, it’s all the internet and they expect all experiences to match their best experiences,” said Dave Lewan, vice president of public sector business at ForeSee and co-author of the commentary released by ForeSee. “The challenge for e-government is to try to match the best of the best, using fewer resources. The third quarter e-gov report shows that it is possible. However, this Index represents 106 federal websites and web services, and there are many more federal initiatives that need to be measuring, tracking, and improving the digital citizen experience.”

In today’s release, federal news and information websites (75) score 3% better in aggregate than the private-sector news and information category rated by the ACSI in July. However, e-government portals and department main sites lag the comparable private sector measure of portals & search engines by 6% (74 vs. 79).

Within the government, e-commerce and transactional e-government websites typically score higher than news/information websites and portals/department main sites. The top three websites are from this category and include three from the Social Security Administration: iClaim (92) and Retirement Estimator (91), and Extra Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs.
Three news/information websites score 87, while one portal/department main site scores 88. A full set of scores can be found [here](#).

“Any website that can meet the needs of its visitor will drive satisfaction and have a direct impact on behavior, and the pay-off is well worth the investment,” said Larry Freed, president and CEO of ForeSee, “Research shows that highly satisfied citizens are more likely to recommend or return to the website, or use it as a primary resource before other more costly channels like call centers than less satisfied website visitors. These are bottom line results, but high satisfaction also builds trust, and that is priceless.”

“Though it is encouraging to see some public sector websites outperforming the private sector, federal government agencies would be foolish to cut e-government budgets under the mistaken impression that less is more,” said Claes Fornell, founder of the ACSI. “When it comes to citizen satisfaction, a satisfied customer is almost always a more profitable one. Or in the case of government, a less expensive one.”

Nearly 300,000 surveys were collected in the third quarter for the Index. 106 federal government websites are included in the third quarter report.

**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. ForeSee is headquartered in Ann Arbor, MI and can be found online at [www.foresee.com](http://www.foresee.com).

**About ACSI**
The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is a national economic indicator of customer evaluations of the quality of products and services available to household consumers in the United States. The ACSI uses data from interviews with roughly 70,000 customers annually as inputs to an econometric model for measuring satisfaction with more than 230 companies in 47 industries and 10 economic sectors, as well as over 100 services, programs, and websites of federal government agencies.

ACSI results are released on a monthly basis, with all measures reported using a scale of 0 to 100. ACSI data have proven to be strongly related to a number of essential indicators of micro and macroeconomic performance. For example, firms with higher levels of customer satisfaction tend to have higher earnings and stock returns relative to competitors. Stock portfolios based on companies that show strong performance in ACSI deliver excess returns in up markets as well as down markets. And, at the macro level, customer satisfaction has been shown to be predictive of both consumer spending and gross domestic product growth.
The Index was founded at the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business and is produced by ACSI LLC and supported in part by ForeSee, corporate sponsor for the e-commerce, e-business, and e-government measurements.

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