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# City pilots a successful virtual customer service platform

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The City of Johannesburg has received raving reviews from its customers on the pilot phase of its first ever virtual customer service platform. The introduction of this unparalleled virtual customer engagement in the City commenced on the 1st and ran till the 5th of August 2022.

The positive feedback from a vast array of the City's ratepayers ranged from comments such as "in the end this was a pleasant and efficient way to interact with the City" to "very professional, helpful and friendly," while other ratepayers hailed the initiative as "quick and efficient."

As the raving reviews kept coming, one customer wrote: "I wanted to give you feedback on the virtual outreach, I decided to resolve an old City Power billing issue which I had practically given up on. I was efficiently assisted; it was a far more pleasant experience than to drive to a customer service centre."

Armed with a carefully chosen team of experts and dedicated staff, comprising departments like Billing, credit management, customer services, rates and taxes, city power and Joburg water among others, the City put together its most competent skill set to ensure a successful implementation of the pilot phase of its virtual customer outreach.

This virtual customer service pilot phase is anchored on the Joburg's multi-party coalition government which set 7 top priorities in a quest to enhance service delivery and improve the overall quality of life for the residents of Johannesburg.

One such priority is **A Smart City**, a priority which the City envisages propelling it to be truly successful, making it innovative

while maximising the use of technology to empower residents and find solutions to most pressing challenges such as query resolution and overall customer service.

The City of Johannesburg presides over close to 900 000 properties with more than 1.2 million accounts which are billed and distributed monthly to all property owners. This makes for a compelling argument that to offer an efficient customer service, innovation cannot be avoided.

It is therefore not surprising that there are raving reviews from customers on the launch of the City's virtual customer service. High work pressures, parental demands and societal commitments make it an inconvenience to be sitting in long queues for customer service. A virtual customer service platform is an unavoidable and much helpful direction for the benefit of the City's customers, especially ratepayers.

This first ever virtual customer service attracted more than 420 customers with issues ranging from debt rehabilitation; property rates; refunds; billing; e-Joburg; City Power and Joburg Water meter reading for billing purposes. All of this brought about much needed hassle free customer service.

The City takes customer service very seriously, the following platforms which are in place to service customers demonstrate a committed organisation that is more than willing to place its customers at the centre of service delivery: A Call centre; 50 Customer Service Centres, 10 of which offer full services in each of the City's 7 regions; regionalised email addresses and an email address for payment arrangement plans.

The over 32 000 customers who end up at the City's customer service centres' door steps every month, raising an array of issues which require clarity or resolution is indicative of a need to innovate to meet customers halfway. Therefore, it was deemed important to pilot a virtual customer service as part of ongoing efforts to demonstrate care for our customers.

The other inevitable fact which cannot not be circumvented is the rate at which property ownership continues to increase. On average the City registers more than 5000 new properties monthly. This means the number of customers increase every month while the City's workforce cannot increase with as much value, this further makes it compelling that innovation be at the centre of customer service to ensure all ratepayers receive attention as and when a need arises.

Providing improved customer service is a key driver of service delivery, something the City takes very seriously. We pride ourselves as a **City that gets the basics right** as one of our priorities. It is this priority that propels the City to keep improving on its customer service objectives.

Plans are afoot towards a future that will see all customers transact with the City at the comfort of their own secure spaces of choice. We invite residents to journey with us as we continue to be hard at work, securing a future that will bring nothing but golden opportunities in the City of Johannesburg.

The golden repair is in full swing, smoothly navigating the dynamic and complicated tunnel at the end of which brightness awaits to benefit a society for which we strive to see enhanced service delivery, improving the overall quality of life.



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