



TEL AVIV'S 'CITIZENS' CLUB' PROVIDES PERSONALIZED CITY SERVICES

Zohar Sharon, Chief Knowledge Officer, City of Tel Aviv, told delegates, "We [Tel Aviv] have a lot of typical smart city projects like smart cameras and smart street lighting. We have smart traffic lights, smart irrigation management, etc., but this is not our speciality... We specialize in knowledge about our people."

He said the city is focused on "improving citizens' lives through engagement." Echoing a major theme of the event overall, Sharon said, "We are using technology as an enabler – the technology is not the most important thing. We need technology to give good services to our residents."

Change from within

Sharon said, "Our approach to this is government-to-government projects, government-to-citizen projects and citizen-to-citizen projects." And this meant starting with internal change.

He explained that the city understood that in "order to give good services to citizens, we have to start internally – we

CITY OF TEL AVIV



CAPITAL:
ISRAEL



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1909



"A START-UP CITY"
1,200 START-UPS



"MEDITERRANEAN
CAPITAL OF COOL"
NEW YORK
TIMES



1,748 BARS, CAFES
AND RESTAURANTS:
**ONE FOR EVERY
231 RESIDENTS**



"YOUNG, WILD
AND FREE"
**1 IN 3 RESIDENTS
AGED 18-35**

have to change the organizational culture and structure” and you “...must share knowledge and information with each other before you can with citizens.”

So this is where the Tel Aviv focused its smart strategy for the first five years. Sharon explained the early efforts were about, “integration, breaking the silos, matrix thinking and workers’ empowerment...to help you achieve your goals.”

What do you think of your city?

When it came to citizens, though, the findings were surprising. “We thought that we are the best city in the world... We have a lot of e-services and information and data...but we weren’t so focused with our citizens,” he said.

“We said that in every moment in life, the city is with you and for you...we understood we have to focus on each resident’s needs.”

The city asked citizens two questions: Firstly, what do you think about the city of Tel Aviv? Everybody said, “Great city, we love the city.”

The second question was what they thought about the municipality of Tel Aviv. The answer? “Opposite, opposite, opposite.”

“Terrible answers,” Sharon said. “So I thought? ‘How can it be?’” From this, he continued, “we understood that it’s not enough to give good services or open data or transparency. It’s very important to do it, but it’s not enough – you have to give information according to the citizens’ needs.”

The intelligently active city

Tel Aviv created the Digi-Tel Residents’ Club and City Card, a ‘citizen club’ like a loyalty club with points.

“We said that in every moment in life, the city is with you and for you,” Sharon explained. “We understood that we have to focus on each resident’s needs; it’s not enough to give some information and to think that everybody will read it. So we took the municipality from a reactive municipality

to an intelligently active municipality. The aim of the municipality is giving good services. The intelligently active municipality is giving services to citizens before they know they need it.”

Each member gets a smart card and receives personalized city information, benefits and e-services. For example, if a street is to be closed for construction work or a fireworks display is planned in an area, only citizens who are living in the street or area get this text message,” rather than everyone.

Similarly, if parents need to register their child for pre-school or kindergarten, they will get a text message or email and can register via the link provided without having to attend in person.

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This system is also a good way to solicit feedback from citizens. For example, if money has been allocated for construction in their neighborhood, they can be consulted if they are affected. “We know they are living there because we have the data,” Sharon explained. “And, most importantly, their permission to use it.”

Give a little, get a lot

Sharon said that people are generally happy to share their data and details because they get a lot of clear benefits in return – such as discounts and targeted offers, which are exclusive to City Card holders. For example, when there are unsold theater seats, members receive alerts that last-minute tickets are available at half price. “The theatres are full in 15 minutes,” he said, which is good news for businesses and venues.

“We cannot solve all the problems of our citizens but we can give them enabling tools to solve their own problems with our help.”