

# 2019 TLG Innovation Showcase Applicant

## Choose Your Own Adventure: A Customer Experience Journey

Fort Worth, Texas

*#Relentless Creativity*

Population: 854,113

### Innovation

#### Criteria:

- Initiative fundamentally changed a process, product or service (fundamental)

OR

- Initiative builds upon existing knowledge to improve a product, process or service (incremental)
- The initiative substantially stretched the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations.

### Describe Your Innovation

*(When and how did this innovation get started? Do also detail how the program or policy innovative, how it has changed previous processes, products, or services, and how it has substantially stretched or improved the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations.)*

In July of 2018, the City of Fort Worth hosted its second of 3 Employee Values Summits, which were launched by the Performance Office at the request of the City Manager. The second of these two Employee Summits addressed the city's core values of Continuous Improvement and Exceptional Customer Experience. At the City of Fort Worth, we have thought a considerable amount about the importance of Exceptional Customer Experience, and in doing so, have made an effort to differentiate this from 'customer service'. In preparing for this second Employee Summit, we attempted to find a unique way to help our employees differentiate between customer service and Exceptional Customer Experience and decided to develop a 'choose your own adventure story' (CYOA). In this CYOA, groups of 4-6 employees were asked to put themselves in the customers' shoes, and began working through a storybook journey that presented them with a scenario based on either an internal or an external customer experience interaction. Employees assuming the role of the customer were then presented with unique customer choices in this booklet, each of which would take the employee deeper into a very unique customer experience. Depending on the choices made, employees may have ended up being part of a very frustrating customer experience, or a very exceptional one. The story incorporated employee interactions, as well as external factors, demonstrating that an employee can provide great customer experience, but without taking a step further into understanding the other factors that effect a customer's perception of their interactions with us, we may still fall short in providing our residents with a truly exceptional customer experience. This training reached over 1200 employees, substantially improving our understanding of Exceptional Customer Experience, and our interactions with internal and external customers alike.

## Collaboration

### Criteria:

- Initiative demonstrated engaging stakeholders both internal and external.
- Initiative demonstrated high performance teaming, breaking down internal silos.
- Strategic partnerships and or community networks were developed as a result of the initiative

In less than 200 words, what individuals or groups are considered the primary initiators of your program? How does the innovation engage stakeholders or demonstrate high performance teaming? What strategic partnerships and/or community networks, if any, were developed?

The Performance and Budget Department was responsible for the comprehensive planning and deployment of the Employee Values Summit. More specifically this content was developed by the Performance Office, which includes the initiators of this specific innovation: Cristi Lemon, Amethyst Sloane, and Morgan Hix. The Purchasing and Code Compliance department also played an integral role in their willingness to let us use examples from their departments in our development of realistic customer experience scenarios. In recognition of a gap in our organizational understanding of our values and their application in our everyday work, this innovation attempted to bridge this gap by actively engaging over 1200 employees in the City of Fort Worth from all backgrounds and job types, encouraging a rare collaborative conversation among these groups to take place on one of our most important organizational topics. This innovation brought together individuals in the organization who may have never encountered each other before, but have often encountered or affected each other's work. From an organizational standpoint, this encouraged and helped to foster a perception of our fellow employees as internal customers, and more importantly as team members that are as equally deserving of an Exceptional Customer Experience as anyone.

If a private consultant was used please describe in detail their involvement, identify the consultant and/or firm and provide contact information. Maintain a 100 word maximum.

N/A

## Significance

### Criteria:

- Initiative addresses an area of concern for the majority of local government organizations.
- Initiative can serve as a model and replicated in other jurisdictions.

Please describe the extent to which you believe your program or policy initiative is potentially replicable within other jurisdictions and why? To your knowledge, have any other jurisdictions or organizations established programs or implemented policies modeled specifically on this project? Please also provide verification of the replication.

This particular innovation could be replicated by any jurisdiction, department, or team that has customers either internal or external, therefore anyone and everyone could use this innovation. This customer experience innovation is not only relevant for an organization with Exceptional Customer Experience as one of their core values, it is relevant for any organization that believes in improving employee interactions with both internal and external

customers. The framework for creating one of these CYOA customer experience journeys could be shared with and utilized by any organization that has a pen and paper, PowerPoint. A key to making this successful, is entering the activity with an open-minded willingness to improve teamwork and customer relations through a deeper look at interpersonal interactions and the external factors that may influence those interactions. To our knowledge, this particular innovation has not been deployed in any other organization.

## Effectiveness

### Criteria:

- Initiative addresses a community or organization need.
- Initiative has achieved tangible results.
- Initiative improved the organizational culture or the traditional approach to problem solving.
- Initiative has received recognition for its achievements, i.e. independent evaluation, national recognition, local press, etc.

**Please describe the most significant obstacle(s) encountered thus far by your program. How have they been dealt with? Which ones remain?**

Perhaps one of the most significant obstacles we faced was encouraging employees to step out of their own shoes and into the shoes of the customer. As city employees who see our own processes each and every day, sometimes it becomes difficult to detach ourselves from our city employee perspective and view things as a new resident to the city might. Prior to deploying this innovation at our Employee Summit, we used a focus group to work through the CYOA activity. It was here that we realized that many city employees would struggle selecting options in the CYOA activity that they felt were unrealistic based on their extensive knowledge of city processes. With this knowledge, we were able to do a far better job of setting the stage for this activity, and in turn prepare city employees to detach from their current perspective and assume the perspective of a typical resident. This opened employee's eyes to the fact that many residents do struggle through some of our processes, and in turn may have a poor or frustrating customer experience that we can always work to improve.

**What outcomes did this program or policy have? Could you share one or two objective measures that demonstrate these outcomes? Ultimately, how did you measure the change based on the intervention, and why do you believe in the credibility of this assessment?**

After the Employee Summit, the Performance Office provided all attendees with the opportunity to provide feedback using a follow up survey. In this survey, we asked a number of questions, with two that stand out as items that indicate the success of this program in improving city employee's understanding of Exceptional Customer Experience. In this survey, 81.95% of employees who attended the summit indicated that they were more confident in their ability to put themselves in the customer's shoes and 84.78% indicated that they felt that the summit helped them understand how to use the City's core values in their work. This assessment was a voluntary survey sent to all who attended the Employee Values Summit, and had a sample size of nearly 300, approximately 25% of all attendees. We felt that this was an adequate sample size to provide us with an accurate assessment of the impact of this innovation on our workforce.

**Has the program received any press or other media coverage to date? If yes, please list the sources and briefly describe relevant coverage.**

N/A

## Presentation

### Criteria:

- Presentation will be delivered by a team.
- Presentation will be highly interactive and engaging.

### Example Social Media Post

Go beyond customer service, follow our Customer Experience Journey to find out how your interactions with customers are not the only factors you need to consider if you want to be exceptional!

**Please write an abstract or short description for your innovation that would make conference attendees say "Well, I need to attend this session!"**

'Choose Your Own Adventure: A Customer Experience Journey' is an innovation in thinking about our interactions with our customers, both internal and external, that is transmittable across all jurisdictions. This activity allows employees to view their interactions from the perspective of the customer, a perspective that is often difficult to attain when we are operating in our everyday work environment. More importantly, this activity helps to provide a real world context that 'customer service' trainings oftentimes ignore. This activity helps employees understand the customer's journey from beginning to end, a journey that is in fact a product of many more factors than the simple interaction that only one employee engages in with the customer.

**How will you make the session creative and unique?- How do you plan to be both entertaining and educational?- Include a description of how your session will facilitate group activities and/or interaction.- What will attendees be able to have as an actionable "takeaway" from the session?**

For our presentation, we would have the opportunity to actually put attendees through an abbreviated version of the exercise. This would not only allow attendees to get an idea about the potential impact of the innovation in a way that is entertaining, different, and engaging, it would allow them to take the framework of the innovation and replicate it in their own jurisdiction if they so desired. This session will be more than just a presentation, it will be an application of the innovation itself. This should provide attendees with insight into the idea of a more in depth look at our interactions with customers, with a takeaway being a challenge to in turn help their own teams approach customer interactions from a more holistic standpoint.

**Anything else you would like to add?**

Although this innovation is a little 'out there' and might call back memories of a CYOA book from grade school, we truly feel that sometimes an outlandish idea is necessary to break down barriers that prevent us from appreciating different perspectives. This innovation broke down barriers in our organizational understanding of one of our most important core values, and in the process helped employees from all backgrounds understand the importance of their own interactions as well as how those interactions may need to change based on a number of external factors. This innovation is simple, which maybe makes it all the more interesting as a topic for this conference. It is not an innovation that is limited by equipment, funding, or knowledge, it can only be limited by an unwillingness to try.