



Uncle Sam at Your Service

The 2011 Federal Customer Experience Study

August 29, 2011

Underwritten by:



In April 2011, The White House released **Executive Order 13571** to streamline Federal service delivery and improve customer service. The order calls agencies to improve the customer experience, solicit customer feedback, adopt proven customer service best practices, streamline agency processes, and do so using innovative technologies.*

So, where are agencies now and how can they meet this directive? The second annual **Federal Customer Experience Study** seeks to answer these questions and set a benchmark for Federal service improvement.

The study surveyed **1,000 Americans** to uncover current customer service perceptions, identify best practices in the public and private sectors, and offer recommendations to agencies on the path forward.



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“With advances in technology and service delivery systems in other sectors, the public's expectations of the government have continued to rise. The government must keep pace with and even exceed those expectations.” – Executive Order 13571

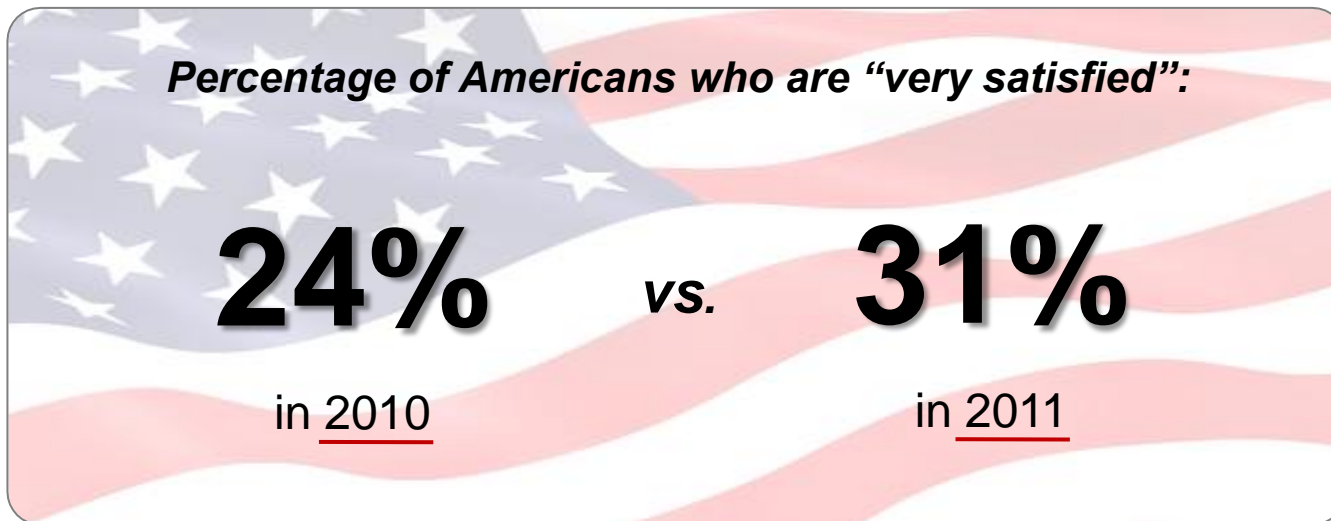


- Federal service is getting better:
 - **31%** of Americans are very satisfied with Federal service this year, up from 24% in 2010
 - Americans report the biggest improvements in agency responsiveness and information consistency, where the percentage of very satisfied Americans grew from 27% to **39%** and 24% to **35%** over the past year
- Still, there is more work to be done:
 - Top agencies show others what is possible – while 39% of Americans are very satisfied with the responsiveness of typical agencies, the top agencies satisfy **63%**
 - **79%** of Americans still believe the Federal government can improve customer service
- To streamline service delivery and improve customer service, agencies must:
 - Simplify the search – Americans believe making it easier to determine where to go for an answer is the **#1** area Feds should focus on
 - Optimize customer data – Nearly all Americans (**91%**) want to tell their story only once and **39%** are willing to let the government store some of their personal information if it means improved customer service

- Americans say Federal service is improving

On average, how satisfied are you with the way Federal agencies provide the following customer service components:*

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| ✓ Issue resolution | ✓ Clarity | ✓ Self-service |
| ✓ Responsiveness | ✓ Consistency | ✓ Community |
| ✓ Courtesy/Professionalism | ✓ Transparency | ✓ Connection |



***Take Away:* Moving in the Right Direction**

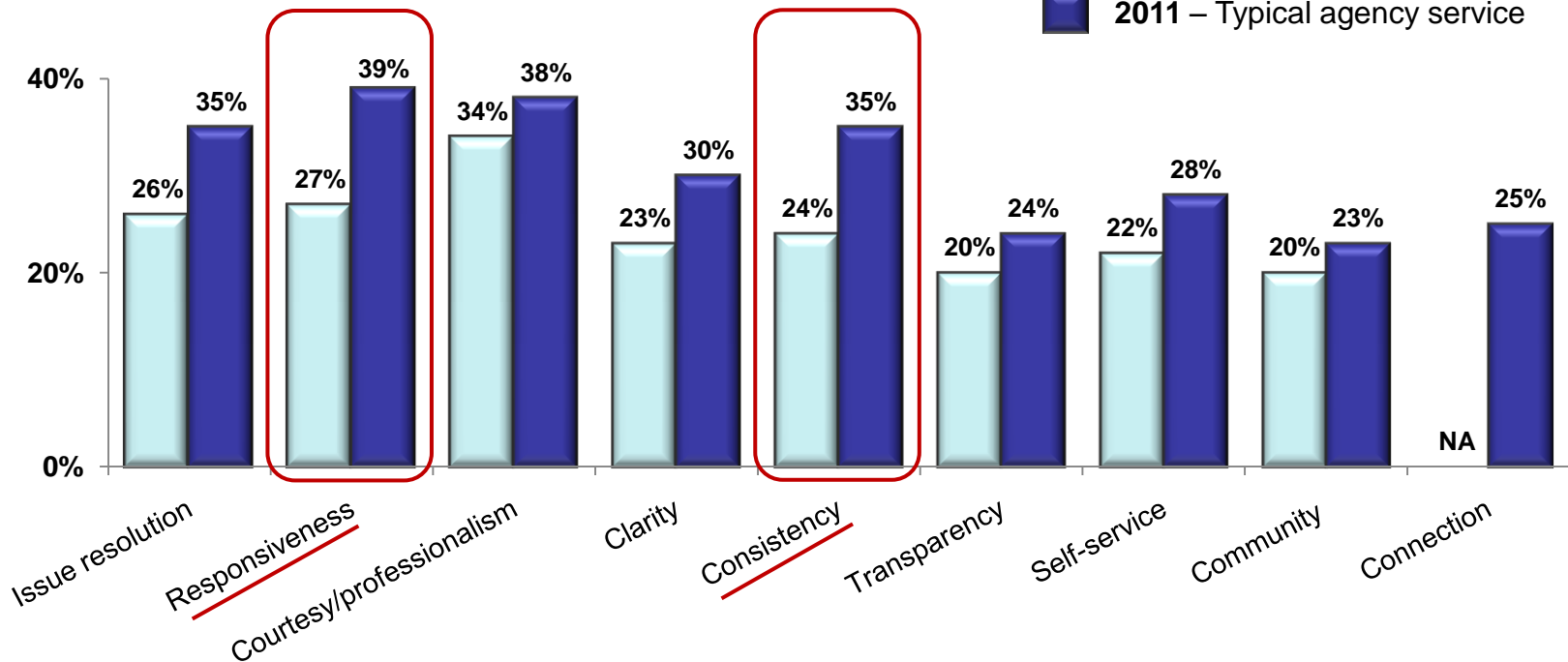
- Americans see biggest leaps in agency responsiveness and information consistency

How satisfied are you with the way the typical Federal agency provides the following customer service components?*

Percentage of Americans who are “very satisfied”:

2010 – Typical agency service

2011 – Typical agency service



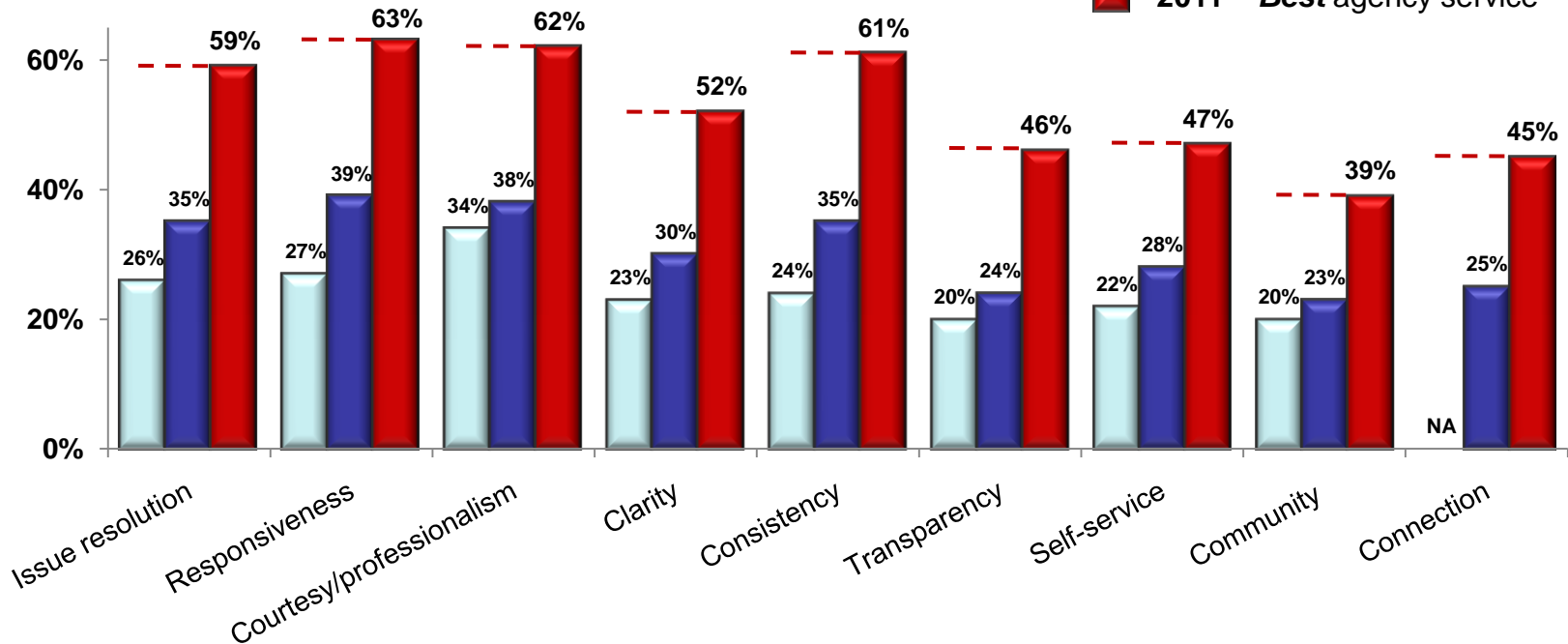
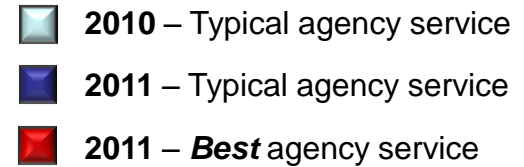
Take Away: Real Progress

*Percentage of respondents who selected 8-10 on a scale of 1 to 10, when 1 was “not at all provided” and 10 was “completely provided.” “Connection” was new to the 2011 survey

- Agencies with superior service show others what is possible

How satisfied are you with the way the typical and the best Federal agencies provide the following customer service components?*

Percentage of Americans who are “very satisfied”:



Take Away: Aim High

*Percentage of respondents who selected 8-10 on a scale of 1 to 10, when 1 was “not at all provided” and 10 was “completely provided.” “Connection” was new to the 2011 survey

- Americans name the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration the top performing agencies in customer service

Which Federal agency has delivered the best customer service to you?

1. Internal Revenue Service (IRS)



“I received a letter from the **IRS** that required my attention – it had the name of a person to contact, and that person actually picked up the phone!”

2. Social Security Administration



“My dealings with the **Social Security Administration** have been **flawless** – from information regarding my benefits to receiving the benefits. This was done via letter and Web site.”

3. United States Postal Service



“I called the Attorney General for the **U.S. Postal Service** regarding fraud. My call was **answered immediately** and a form was mailed out immediately.”

4. Department of Education



“The **student loan Web site** is great, **easy to navigate**, and **provides all answers** needed.”

5. State Department



“I applied for a **passport** by submitting a form at the local post office. The passport arrived a lot **sooner than expected**. I was thrilled with the **responsiveness** of the department.”

Take Away: Learn from the Leaders

- Despite progress, Americans still feel they receive better service from private companies

On average, how satisfied are you with the way Federal agencies and private companies provide the following customer service components:*

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| ✓ Issue resolution | ✓ Clarity | ✓ Self-service |
| ✓ Responsiveness | ✓ Consistency | ✓ Community |
| ✓ Courtesy/Professionalism | ✓ Transparency | ✓ Connection |

Percentage of Americans who are “very satisfied”:

31%

with **public** sector service

vs.

44%

with **private** sector service

“Government managers must learn from what is working in the private sector and apply these best practices to deliver services better, faster, and at lower cost.” – Executive Order 13571



Take Away: Understand Private Sector Success

- The private sector excels in the customer service areas Americans value most

How satisfied are you with the way Federal agencies and private companies provide the following customer service components?*

Percentage of Americans who are “very satisfied”:

	Public	Private		
Responsiveness	39%	57%	(+18%)	<i>Private sector has biggest leads in the customer service areas Americans say they value most</i>
Courtesy and professionalism	38%	56%	(+18%)	
Issue resolution	35%	51%	(+16%)	
Community	23%	32%	(+9%)	<i>Feds close the gap in less valued areas</i>
Transparency	24%	30%	(+6%)	

Take Away: Good Service Aligns with Customer Priorities

*Percentage of respondents who selected 8-10 on a scale of 1 to 10, when 1 was “not at all provided” and 10 was “completely provided”

- According to Americans, both private companies *and* Federal agencies still fall short of their service expectations

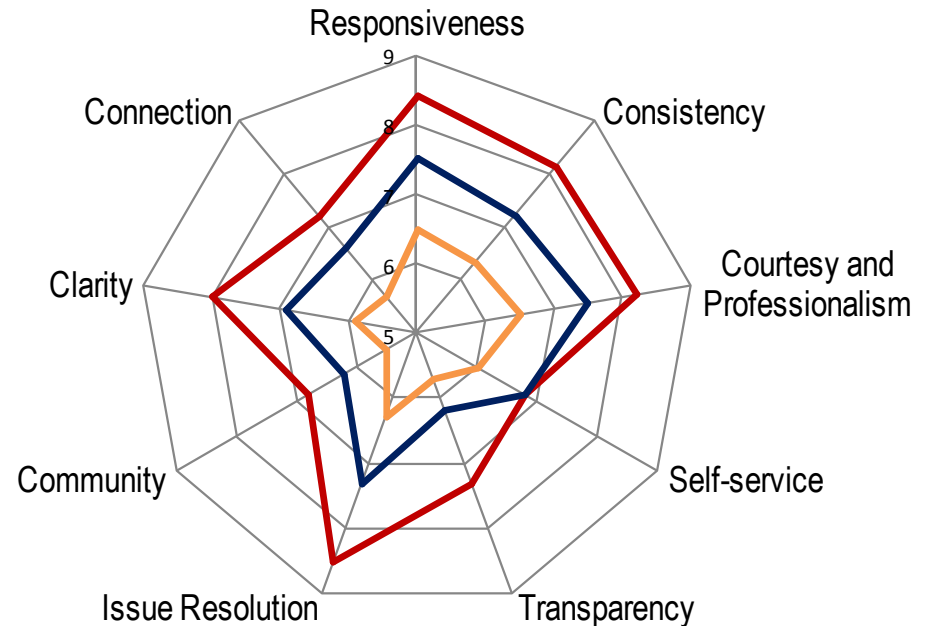
Customer Service: Expectations vs. Reality

Respondents rated the importance of each service attribute on a scale of 1-10* and then rated the degree to which private companies and Federal agencies *typically* provide each attribute.**

The perimeter of the Web represents a 9 out of 10, so the closer the plotted line is to the outside of the Web, the higher the attribute rating.

Key

- Importance of the attribute
- Private company – Typical experience
- Federal agency – Typical experience



Take Away: Close the Gap

- Americans believe agencies can continue to improve

Do you believe the Federal government **can improve** customer service?

2010	83% say yes
2011	79% say yes

Would you be **willing to pay** \$10 more in taxes each year for better Federal service?

2010	42% say yes
2011	30% say yes



Take Away: Support for Continued Change

How do we get
there from here?



- Americans ask agencies to point them in the right direction

Which of the following areas should the Federal government focus on to improve customer service?*

- #1** Making it easier to determine where to go for an answer (45%)
- #2** Improving response times (42%)
- #3** Providing consistent information (26%)
- #4** Improving representatives' listening skills (18%)
- #5** Adding more self-service options, like online question and answer features (15%)

According to the General Services Administration, the Federal government

possesses **1,761**

second level Web domains**

“[Agencies must] streamline processes to reduce costs and accelerate delivery, while reducing the need for customer calls and inquiries.” – Executive Order 13571



Take Away: Simplify the Search

- The majority of Americans report connecting with the government online

In which of the following ways have you interacted with the Federal government in the past 12 months?*

- 44%** Visited a Federal government Web site to learn about government programs or benefits
- 41%** Downloaded a Federal government form from the Web
- 34%** Contacted a Federal office by phone
- 24%** Visited a Federal government office in person
- 3%** Used a Federal mobile application (app)
- 3%** Connected with a Federal organization through Facebook
- 1%** Connected with a Federal organization through Twitter



“[Improve] the customer experience by... coordinating across service channels (such as online, phone, in-person, and mail services).”
– Executive Order 13571

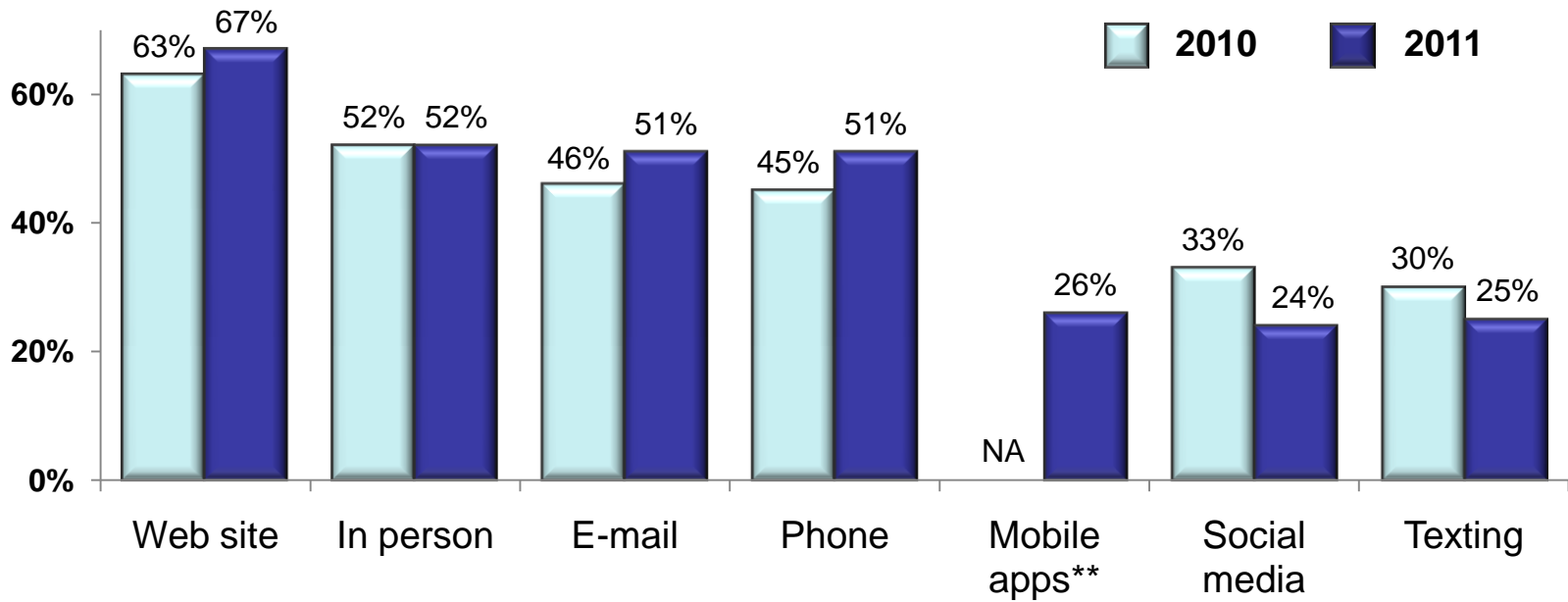


Take Away: Embrace a Multi-Channel Approach

- Americans continue to be most satisfied with Web interactions

How would you rate the quality of your interactions with Federal agencies via each of the following channels?*

Percentage of Americans who rated their interaction “good” or “excellent”:



Take Away: Enable Self-Service

- A growing number of Americans are interested in connecting with the government through mobile apps

3% of Americans have used a Federal mobile app in the last 12 months

But

18% say they would like to connect with agencies this way

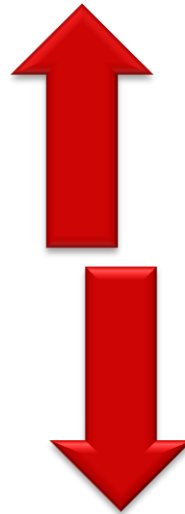
On average, Americans **prefer mobile apps** to texts or social media – 18% to 13% and 11% respectively



Take Away: Watch the Trend

- Americans ask Federal employees to listen and take note

Nearly all Americans (**91%**) want to tell their story once, so if they are transferred to another person, they already have the background to their question



39% are willing to share some personal information (such as their address and contact information) for the Federal government to store in a "customer profile" if it means improved customer service

Americans suggest:

*"Log the conversation in some way so I don't have to repeat my situation many times."
"Unify various agencies' Web sites under one 'master' site and allow customers to have an 'account' on file with all of their relevant data."*

Take Away: Offer Opt-in Accounts

- Americans ask agencies to:
 - ✓ Spend **smarter** – invest in tools that will simplify Federal data search to help customers and employees find answers faster
 - ✓ Embrace a **multi-channel** approach – use a variety of communication methods to accommodate customer preferences
 - ✓ **Optimize** data – keep clear customer records and offer opt-in accounts to streamline service delivery



- MeriTalk, on behalf of RightNow, conducted the online survey of **1,000 Americans** in July 2011. The report has a margin of error of +/- 3.10% at a 95% confidence level

Gender	
49%	Male
51%	Female

Year Born	
13%	Before 1946 (<i>Silent Generation</i>)
30%	1946-1964 (<i>Baby Boomers</i>)
25%	1965-1976 (<i>Generation X</i>)
32%	1977-1992 (<i>Generation Y</i>)

Employment Status	
8%	Student
6%	Unemployed
3%	Full-time parent
13%	Employed part-time
50%	Employed full time
16%	Retired
4%	Other

Thank You

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- Customer service criteria, as defined in the survey:
 - ✓ **Issue Resolution:** I feel that my issues are handled professionally and thoroughly – from my first inquiry through issue resolution
 - ✓ **Responsiveness:** I receive prompt attention to my inquiries/issues, and I receive timely responses
 - ✓ **Courtesy and Professionalism:** I feel that my interactions are congenial and that I am treated with courtesy and respect
 - ✓ **Clarity:** I feel that the organization provides me with clear, easy-to-understand instructions
 - ✓ **Consistency:** I get the same information from different staff members/offices, regardless of the channel
 - ✓ **Transparency:** I can track my interactions with the organization
 - ✓ **Self-service:** I feel empowered to find the information I need to complete my task
 - ✓ **Community:** I feel that the organization helps me connect with other customers via forums, events, etc.
 - ✓ **Connection:** I feel that the organization uses two-way communication to proactively engage with me on a personal level. They encourage my feedback and use it to improve their service*