

# The Intersection Between CXOs and Technology

Summary of Roundtable, hosted by ATARC in December 2022

## WHITE PAPER

The role of a Chief Experience Officer (CXO) is a relatively new one, especially within the Federal government. CXOs are added to organizational charts to help promote a customer centric mindset throughout business processes. Their teams build strategic systems, improve business processes, and transform government service delivery to benefit both internal and external stakeholders.

But unlike the more clear-cut responsibilities of a Chief Information Systems Officer (CISO) or a Chief Data Officer (CDO), CXOs work across agencies and in many disciplines, including service delivery, compliance, user experience and strategic development - to name a few. Because a CXO commands wide-ranging responsibility and business focus, many agencies face challenges effectively incorporating the unique role within the organization.

The Advanced Technology Academic Research Center (ATARC) recently hosted a roundtable discussion with Federal experts to discuss the role of CXOs within agencies. While several agencies are making strides to reposition business priorities to focus on the customer experience, there are other agencies that are just beginning this work.

## The Best Place for CX

With a renewed focus on improving service delivery and the customer experience, agencies have been able to create efficiencies and better experiences for both internal and external customers. Using technology and human centered design principles, agencies have also been better able to solve customer pain points. Other agencies have used customer experience (CX) methodologies to make it easier for customers to find information online and to do business with the government.

While focusing on the external customer's experience is certainly important, agencies are also using the CX lens to improve employee experiences. In both instances, employees and customers can benefit from transforming processes into efficient and user-friendly digital experiences. However, while improving websites is an important component of CX, roundtable participants emphasize that CX is much, much more than improving an agency's website.



I still hear people say that CX means a prettier website. We need to figure out a way to stop saying that.

CX involves mapping customer journeys, listening to the voice of the customer, understanding the nuances of customer pain points, and translating customer feedback into strategic-level decision making. The role of the CXO is to orchestrate the cycle of customer feedback, high-level decision-making, and project level implementation across the agency. As such, CX teams need access to both the leaders making decisions and the teams doing the work. The question becomes, where does a CXO sit on an organizational chart?

Some agencies at the roundtable position their CX roles within staff offices that report to leadership. Other agencies have designated Strategic Planning Offices that focus on customer experiences, while others have CX roles reporting to the CIO. Some participants like having CX roles report to the CIO because of their ability to incubate in a safe and

operationally focused space. However, most others pushed back on the notion of mingling CX with technology roles.

They argue that the CXO requires tools and capabilities to enable the mission, which ultimately requires working with people who are closest to the mission. CXOs can conduct surveys and collect data, but if that work does not translate to the implementation of some type of improvement, then the work is useless. Many agency-wide tasks fall to the responsibility of the CIO, because they already cross-cut the organization and all mission areas. While logical to pair the two roles due to their reach, CXOs need the type of visibility and authority to command real change.



You can have a CXO that reports centrally, but they need to have deep relationships with, and even have staff embedded

within different mission areas who have frontline experience around what the challenges are, and actually understand the nuances of mission delivery enough to be able to influence the right things so that they actually improve things.

Roundtable participants agree that CXOs need higher visibility within an organization to not only make strategic decisions, but to also be held accountable to implement those decisions. Many agencies have reached a maturity level where business objectives are ever more influenced by customer experience. The CXO must be able to view the agency's mission from the customer perspective and claim ownership of the connected journey through their agency.

## Training for a CX Culture

Participants emphasized the need to dismantle the misconception that customer experience can improve simply by overhauling a website or adopting new technology. What participants have found is that agencies think they

have addressed a problem with technology, but later come to realize that the customer's pain point still exists.

Considerable training must be done to educate the workforce on CX and the practical applications of CX methodologies. One panelist noted that the fundamental skills required of good CX are missing at all levels of government. Many agencies lack the capacity to conduct human-centered design interviews, which participants suggest is a foundational CX skill.

Even agency communication approach can be done through a CX lens. For example, writing in plain language enables the end user to read something and process it in a way that is beneficial to them. Data collection is another area where CX should be considered and implemented. Because data is a core element of good CX, one participant suggests that the CDOs and CXOs should work closely together on shared strategy and objectives.

The CXO is a role that needs to collaborate at the product level on service design, while improving areas where product managers cannot deliver value to the customer. Whether that is budget, policies, or improving signage in a building, the CXO takes on a holistic role at an agency. Although considered one of the biggest challenges, the ability to translate research into action is at the heart of CX.



The individual who's in that role needs to have a very clear line of responsibility and span of control and authority, so that they can't be ignored.

Participants admit that agencies are complex, and budgets are tight. While there is much to be done to improve CX and integrate these methodologies throughout agency missions, panelists agree that the tides are turning in favor of prioritizing customer experience in service delivery.

For events on this and other topics, please see [ATARC Events calendar](#).