Improving citizen services through mission-centered system design

Federal agencies are under growing pressure to deliver citizen services at the same speed, transparency, and personalization seen in the private sector.

New mandates, including the Government Service Delivery Improvement Act (GSDIA), push agencies to reduce burden, improve accessibility, and ensure equity and transparency across the entire citizen experience. Yet many modernization efforts stall due to siloed systems, inaccessible or incomplete data, and service models that prioritize volume over impact.

At the root of the problem is a persistent disconnect between technology, data, and mission. While agencies are making advances in automation and customer experience (CX), many struggle to scale or sustain these improvements without a holistic framework. Agencies need a new approach, one that is purpose-driven, adaptive, and built around measurable mission outcomes. Mission-centered system design (MCSD) offers a way to turn scattered improvements into unified, intelligence-driven citizen services.

To help agencies move from fragmented fixes to lasting impact, Maximus employs this structured approach to integrate CX, policy, technology, and data under one cohesive, mission-focused framework.

System-wide alignment in action

Maximus applied MCSD to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into citizen-facing operations, helping to reduce contact center costs and improve authentication. In a separate initiative, they aligned organizational goals with benefit services contracts to enhance retiree services and mission delivery.

The dual data challenge

Today, most agencies face a compounded data problem. First, information is often fragmented and trapped in legacy systems that cannot meaningfully interact, is stored on paper, or siloed in inaccessible formats. Second, even when data is technically available, it is often unstructured or lacks behavioral context. Think about a five-minute call vs. a seven-minute call. If the seven-minute call resolves a constituent's problem, but a five-minute call generates another five-minute call, the seven-minute call is the most successful and cost efficient. But agencies often are not equipped to capture and learn from that experience – which means missed opportunities to reduce friction and improve outcomes.

Even when data exists, agencies without a single, consolidated, accurate, and current knowledge management system struggle to provide timely information and guidance to constituents through various channels: web-based resources, contact center agents, chatbots, and more. And, absent cross-channel insights or longitudinal views of the citizen, agencies cannot predict needs or personalize interactions.

Transactional systems in a mission-driven world

Most government systems were built to handle one function, on one channel at one point in time. They weren't designed to support omnichannel service or evolving citizen needs. This architecture results in duplicated data entry, disconnected hand-offs, and repeat interactions that erode trust.

Traditional CX metrics compound the issue. For example, shorter call times and lower abandonment rates may look good on a dashboard, but if constituents must call several times to resolve a question or problem, their experience is degraded, and government services cost more. Agencies need to move away from measuring what is reportable to measuring what matters – citizen service outcomes.

Personalization that builds trust

In high-volume environments like Medicare and Social Security, Maximus has demonstrated the power of personalized service. By implementing a streamlined seven-minute process for common citizen needs, simplifying transitions, and proactively providing status updates, Maximus improved both speed and satisfaction, reducing repeat calls and strengthening citizen trust.

Why MCSD matters now – and how Maximus helps

With GSDIA deadlines approaching in 2026 and 2027, agencies will be required to report outcomes not just in terms of efficiency, but also burden reduction, accessibility, fairness, and transparency. This demands a strategic shift away from incremental, siloed fixes and toward intelligence-driven systems that align CX, technology, and policy to mission outcomes. With MCSD, agencies can transform modernization efforts from compliance exercises into intelligent, outcome-driven systems.

MCSD is built on four principles:

1. **Mission-first:** Design every service and system with a direct link to mission impact. Align every incremental improvement with a larger, mission-centered objective.

2. **Outcome-driven and shared risk:** Use measurable public outcomes – not just service-level agreements – as success indicators, and where possible, the agency and its contractor share delivery risk.

3. **Adaptive by design:** Build systems that evolve with policy changes, feedback, and citizen behavior.

4. **System-wide alignment:** Integrate data, technology, CX, and policy into a unified delivery model.

Building a strong data strategy

Maximus helps agencies move beyond basic data collection to intelligence generation. Using human-centered design, Maximus identifies key digital and analog touchpoints that can generate actionable insights, from web activity to form submissions and more. Through advanced simulation techniques such as digital twins, Maximus helps agencies test policy scenarios and predict outcomes before implementation, minimizing risk.

Maximus also emphasizes customer relationship management and knowledge management systems that support relationships over time, rather than one-time transactions. This foundational layer is critical to enabling more advanced AI-powered service delivery.

Implementing a roadmap – from efficiency to intelligence

Maximus supports a phased modernization roadmap for MCSD:

- **Stage 1 – efficiency:** Automate simple workflows and deploy high-performing voice and chatbots. These tools are already resolving up to 85 percent of calls for some federal programs, with customer satisfaction ratings of 4.5 out of 5. Costs are reduced, and citizen service begins to improve.

- **Stage 2 – effectiveness:** Build on this foundation with workflows that address constituent needs holistically, as well as predictive analytics to anticipate needs and offer personalized support.

- **Stage 3 – intelligence:** Move toward mission simulation and self-optimizing systems that continuously improve outcomes through AI and cross-agency data integration.

Sharing risk and driving impact with outcome-based contracting

Maximus leads the way in outcome-based contracts that prioritize results over process. In these models, Maximus is incentivized – and in some cases compensated – based on real-world mission success, such as program enrollment.

This approach includes three tiers:

1. **Delivery and Consulting**
2. **Performance-Based Progress Tracking**
3. **Outcome-Based Contracts**

Maximus shares risk and reward with agencies, using predictive models to drive measurable improvement.

The next step

As agencies work to meet the requirements of GSDIA and beyond, Maximus helps agencies elevate every constituent interaction from a transaction to a mission outcome. By embedding intelligence and mission alignment into every aspect of service design, Maximus enables agencies to do more than modernize; they transform how government serves the people.

Learn more at **maximus.com/customer-experience** or **contact us** to get started.

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