

# Touchpoint

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# Government ICT: From Infrastructure to Service Enabler



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The public sector executive looked at their telephone and said: "It's just a plastic box on a desk until there are services connected to it - we need to make sure both those things happen." And so began our long-term relationship with the Australian Taxation Office's (ATO) Infrastructure group.

One risk to organisations that are striving to be customer and service-centric can be too much focus on external-facing touchpoints and services, such as a website. We believe that for any organisation to be truly customer and service-centric, a focus on all layers of a complex organisation is critical, both the customer-facing external touchpoints and the internal organisational capabilities.

## SERVICE DESIGN IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Design Managers Australia (DMA) has spent the last decade working with the Australian public sector to make a difference in people's lives by applying service design practice and shaping services in areas such as taxation, environmental management and human services.

This case study explores how we've applied service design practice and thinking in an Information Communication and Technology (ICT) environment. It demonstrates how the work we have done has helped to shift the

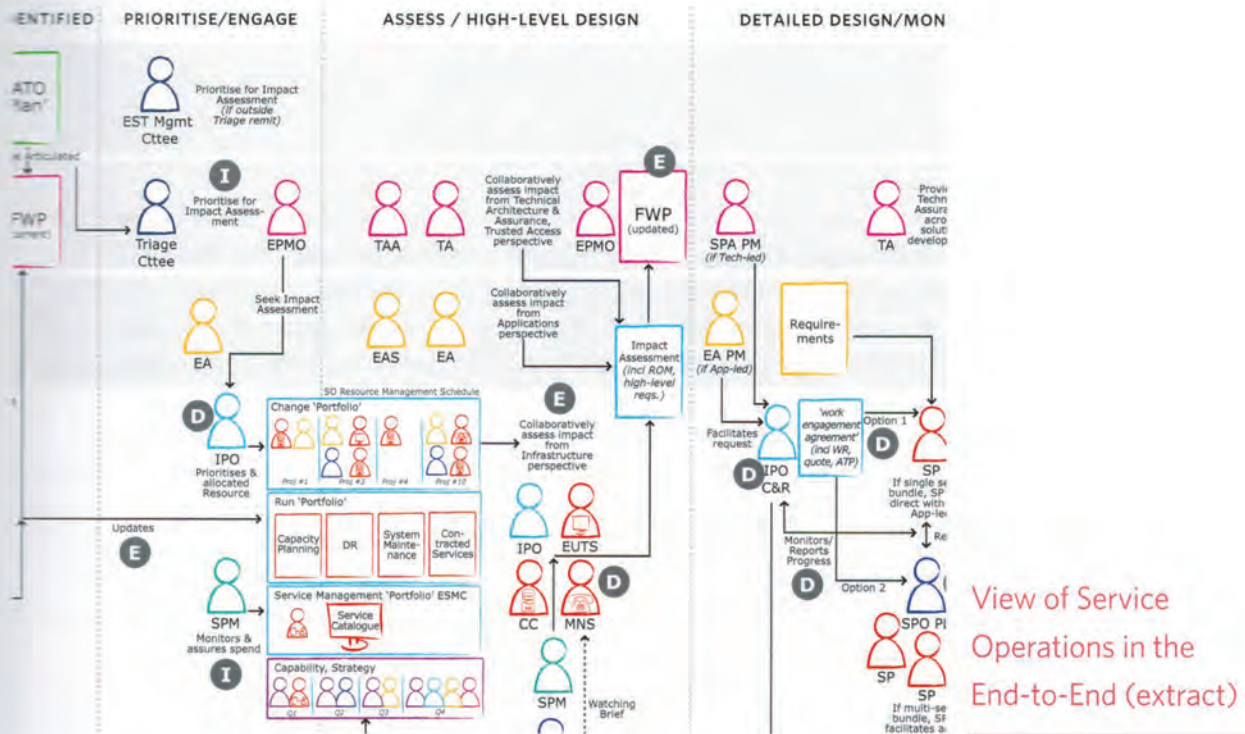
mindset of senior ICT executive leaders from managing the delivery of technology products to being enablers of service and business outcomes.

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is responsible for administering a range of taxation and superannuation services for businesses and individuals. In this context - as in any complex organisation - ICT is critical for both enabling and delivering these services.

'Infrastructure' includes foundation services such as networks, centralised computing hardware, end-user technologies, phones and other devices. These are the very things taxpayers, businesses, intermediaries and the ATO supporting staff use to understand, comply and effectively access service delivery.

In 2009, a significant organisational shift occurred with an outsourced multi-vendor environment introduced to deliver the different and increasingly complex Infrastructure platforms and services. This shift resulted in a number of implementation challenges including





a need to focus on collaboration between outsourced providers, pressure for benefits realisation and expectations of innovation in infrastructure delivery.

The multi-vendor infrastructure environment is managed by ATO Service Operations (SO) a group ultimately responsible for the delivery of ICT infrastructure, such as call-centre facilities, through outsourced provider arrangements. They came to us seeking a new way to approach infrastructure delivery to ensure it consciously supported the business of the ATO and was not just an old ICT view of products from vendors.

#### DESIGNING THE SERVICES SYSTEM FROM WITHIN

With SO as partner and collaborator, three significant shifts in mindset have stood out, both for us and for SO.

#### Visualisation to explore and create shared meaning

Dubbed the 'Jelly Baby' diagram (see above), we were able to describe the multi-vendor environment at a visual level that people from different perspectives and disciplines could relate to. Though having the hallmarks of a process map, it was actually articulated as an experience map. This difference meant we could sequence activities in non-process language and show the entire ecosystem while focusing on the specific internal

service that enabled the other services.

The visualisation became a tangible meeting of 'what we say we do' and 'what we actually do'. Not everyone agreed with all of the detail in the map, but the conversation it created was invaluable because the visualisation not only helped the decision-makers involved make sense of their world, but also enabled them to discuss and assess the impacts of change. This continues to be proven with the 'Jelly Baby' picture still referenced as shorthand for what the designed state looks like.

During this work, it was important for us to be clear that our job was not to validate or fix what they did (or didn't) do, but rather to reflect back to them what *actually* happened so that it could be a starting point for exploring different options and scenarios towards service ecosystem maturity.

#### Designing for an operating model paradigm shift

ICT can sometimes allow itself to become the downstream providers of product.



When critical questions arose around the specifics of how the portfolios of infrastructure delivery are managed and organised for response, the opportunity arose to embark on a new detailed service design project that would provide SO with a tangible way to re-define themselves as *providers of services*.

The concept of an Infrastructure Portfolio Office (IPO), a group responsible for making sure complex enabling services could be delivered sustainably, had been identified in other work. In fact, it had already been implemented without any design work.

We worked with an ATO team of non-designers and technical subject matter experts from different disciplines. Over six weeks, we collaboratively explored, prototyped and developed a range of key design elements including the IPO service offer, value proposition, service element breakdown, user typologies and operating principles. The result provided a significant paradigm shift for our clients, compelling them to adhere to strict

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### Workshopping service concept with different teams



value propositions and structures, but realising through this that an IPO with a focus on service could offer a platform for engagement across the organisation. More significantly, Service Operation's thinking evolved from 'how does the multi-vendor environment operate' to 'how do we support the ATO's business outcomes through a service-enabling multi-vendor environment'.

### *Reframing ICT service to meet business need*

Good design is confrontational, because it challenges how people and functions may see or define their role in a service system. This was particularly relevant when we embarked on exploring how 'The Business' (translation: everyone outside of ICT) could play a more active role within the ICT environment.

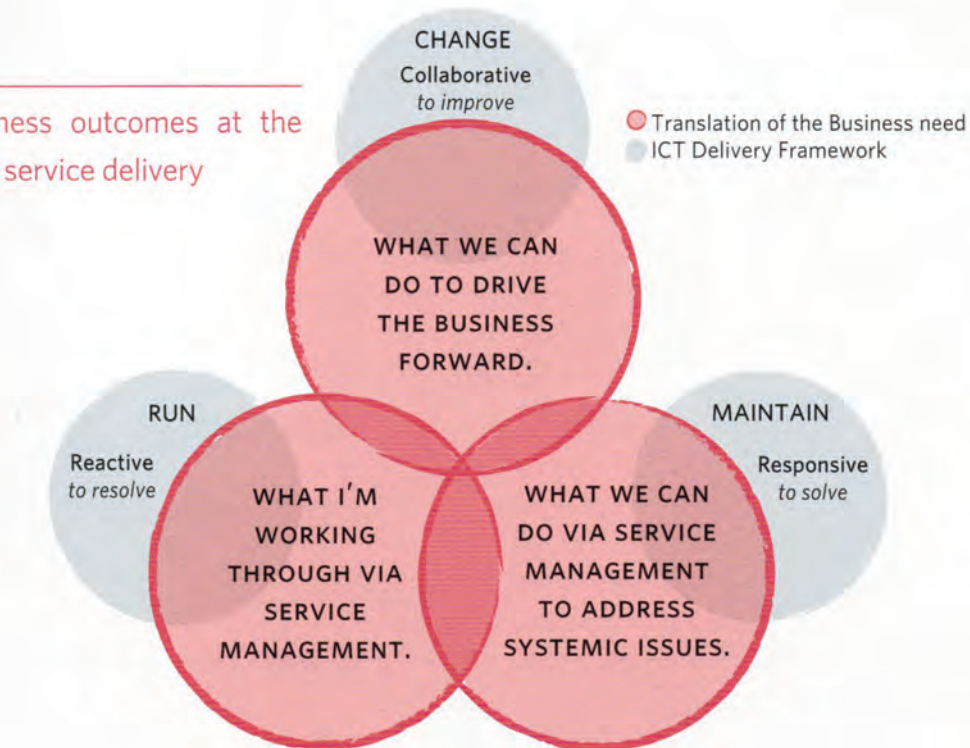
Understanding and articulating the experience of The Business was critical in an organisation where ICT is operating with a range of other organisational drivers, such as:

- Key operational areas having deep experience as the 'end-user' of technology providers.
- The increased outsourcing of taxation activities to intermediaries such as tax agents and accountants, or to citizens.
- Increased delivery of services in a whole-of-government setting.

Rather than simply report back on what The Business could do to be active, the challenge presented by our work was, instead, to reframe the position of the ICT group. It shifted from an ICT-centric view to a view that focuses on presenting opportunities to better support The Business for ATO outcomes.



## Putting business outcomes at the centre of ICT service delivery



We were then able to describe an evolving roadmap of work for how Infrastructure could be delivered better with Business and for Business.

The combination of the challenge of new ways of seeing their role, the concept of being part of a service system, and the detailed roadmap for change became a catalyst for how they actually needed to change.

### SERVICE DESIGN AS THE 'HOW' PROCESS

In this case study, we've explored the value of service design to find, show and describe the middle ground that connects the 'plastic boxes' to customer and citizen outcomes, and it's where our client has found significant value and new ways of thinking. While the topic of this program of work is ICT-specific, the service design methods are applicable across a range of industries because, at heart, the work was about understanding service need and the desired business outcome.

As Craig Fox, Assistant Commissioner, Service Operations said: "You challenged us to think differently. ... You said, unless you change the ecosystem this

capability has to work within, it's not going to work." We believe that good service design results in people being able to make decisions that are right for them and their circumstances, whether it is the customer, the citizen, the call centre operator, the business analyst, the team leader or the manager. In this case, solutions provided through the multi-vendor environment are going to be of a higher quality because they have stopped being about the 'box' and have started being about the service that the box enables for staff and customers. ●

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