Let's talk about the customer

Digital solutions for social housing

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England is in the grip of a housing crisis.

We tend to concentrate on the lack of supply. But the issues extend well beyond that.

Building more homes isn't enough. People already living in properties provided by social landlords and prospective tenants are expecting and demanding more. They want their landlords to provide quality experiences that are designed around their needs. They want to choose digital channels that are simple and easy to use. They need to trust that the organisation is looking after their data properly.

Quite simply they want the organisation to put them first.

This is the age of the customer

What does this mean for social housing providers?

From our conversations with large and small providers we know that customer and digital transformation are key strategic priorities for many organisations. We also know that redesigning customer journeys to deliver great digital experiences can reduce costs and improve satisfaction. These will both be among the highest priorities of any social housing provider. Some social landlords are grasping the opportunity that digital presents by investing in digital platforms and other enabling technology solutions. But technology on its own is rarely the answer and we all have stories of where IT projects have failed to deliver the benefits expected.

Organisations that will be successful in transforming digitally will look beyond the design and implementation of digital solutions. They will educate management and staff to understand how to use digital solutions to transform how they work.

We believe they also need to:

- **Use real insight** about their customers to develop services to meet those needs in the most efficient and effective way. Recognise that not all customers can or will use digital channels and build this into service designs.

- **Redesign services to transform the customer experience** and the relationships that people and communities have with their housing provider. Move beyond just providing services online into a place where tenants and organisations collaborate to improve the quality of life in their communities.

- **Using data** and turn it into business insight that drives decision making and makes the organisation more responsive to customer needs. Use analytics to help predict the best actions to take to deliver the organisation's strategy and make the most difference to customers and their communities.

- **Embrace the mobile mind shift** to engage with customers who might be harder to reach and help staff adopt more agile working practices. Enable customers to be engaged and services to be delivered more easily in the places where they are needed.

Turn big data into business insights

Transform the customer experience

Age of the customer

Embrace the mobile mind shift

Accelerate your digital business

Source: "The CMO's Blueprint For Strategy In The Age Of The Customer, Forrester Research, Inc., September 12, 2014"
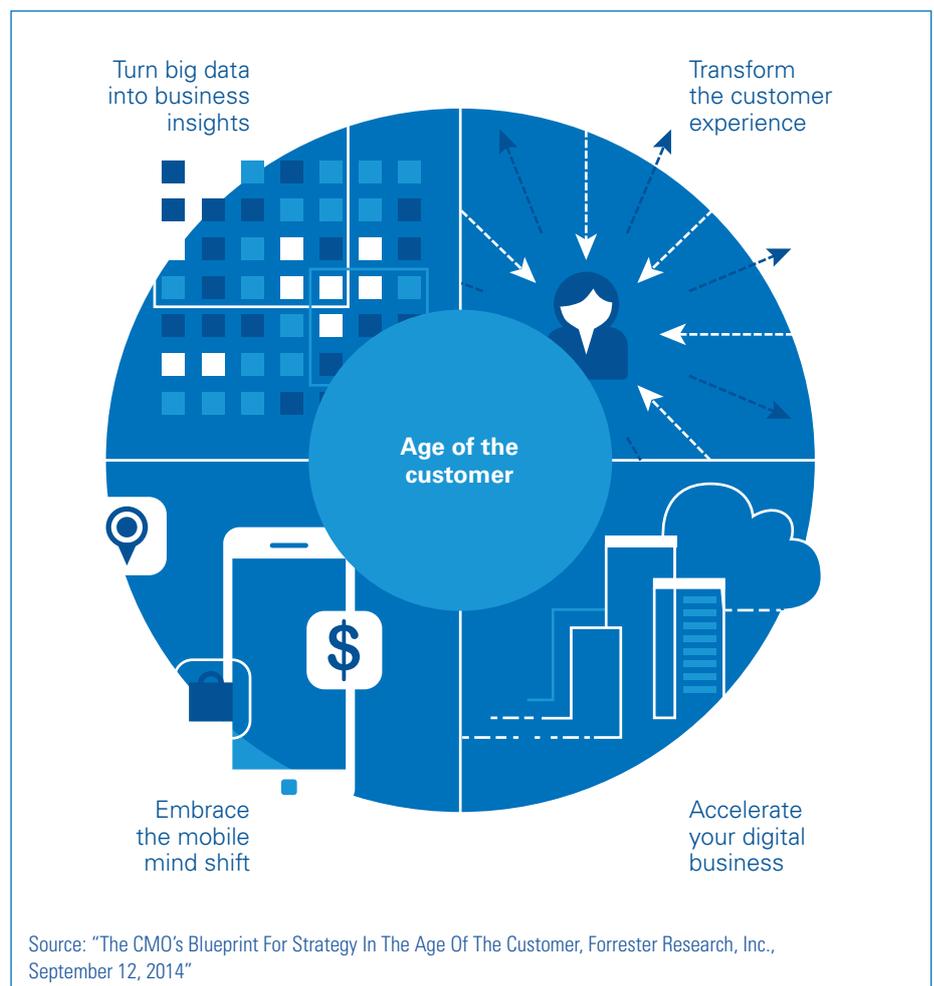
- **Recognise** that digital is an all-encompassing industry disruptor. Act as a mechanism to reset the whole organisation and challenge the entire social housing service provision.
- **Use digital** to better work with other organisations providing services to the customer and where collaborating would deliver better outcomes for the customer and their family.

In short, providers need to focus properly on how they can deliver efficient and effective customer experiences that exploit the opportunity digital solutions present.

Digital as a change enabler

What do we really mean when we talk about digital in the context of social housing? It might mean technology such as websites, social media and data. Or the customer experience and how the organisation engages with its customers, e.g. booking repairs or inspections online. Or be about fundamentally different ways of doing business. In reality, it is all of these things and more.

Digital has forced us to think about people and their relationships with each other, with technology and with the organisations they interact with and work within. It has made us focus on putting the customer first.

Digital solutions and culture are evolving fast and have already had a positive impact on the services that landlords provide to their tenants. But this revolution is not simply about getting people to change how they communicate and shift access channels from face-to-face to telephone to web. Providers will need to use digital technology to drive change in their understanding of their customers and their assets, to find out how the two interact, and to improve customer engagement and experience.

The importance of data

Many think of digital as Social, Mobile, Analytics and Cloud (SMAC). We believe that data needs to be added to this mix. Data collected when assessing and providing services is a vital and under-used resource. Organisations that truly focus on the customer combine SMAC with great data analytics to help them predict rather than react to customer needs.
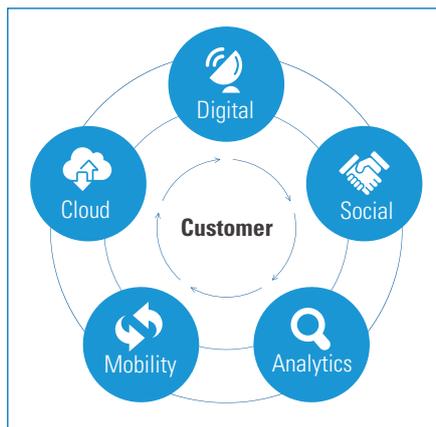

Many parts of the private sector, such as financial services, and the public sector, such as healthcare, already use data and insight to improve decision making and service targeting. Housing providers can do the same. But to achieve this they need to strengthen their capacity and capability in data collection, management, and analytics. Then they can produce quality insight and intelligence that will underpin investment and develop new ways of service delivery.

How we can help

We help social landlords exploit all aspects of the opportunity that digital presents, from strategy to execution and the delivery of innovative digital platforms. This can involve developing and implementing great experiences that put customers first while driving a channel shift and helping reduce costs. We can also maximise the value presented by data sharing.

Through our Customer and Digital Transformation capabilities, we help our clients to become customer-focused organisations, better able to understand and serve their customers. We can help you develop your customer strategy and design and implement the key changes that will both improve your customers' experience and reduce your operating costs.
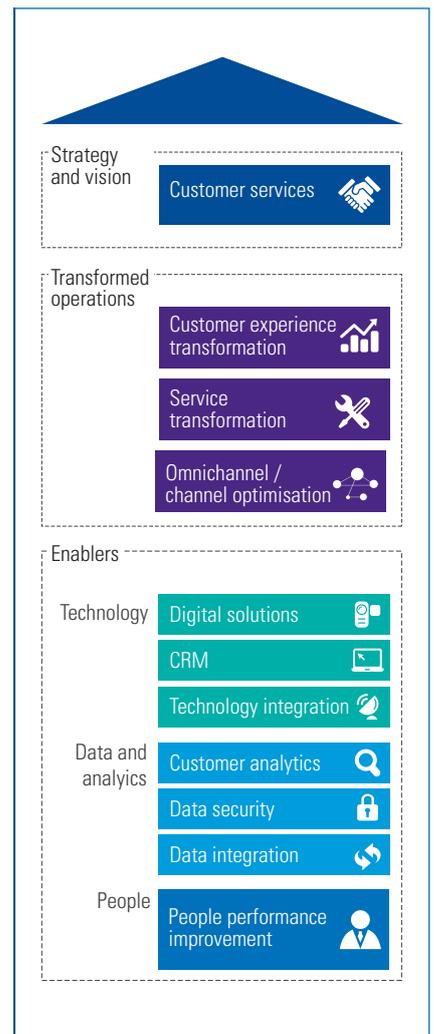
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