

Digital Transformation (DX) promotion in Fukuoka City: Implementation of a remote service counter



Background

Japan is facing the nationwide challenge of a declining birth rate, an aging population, and a shrinking workforce. In Fukuoka City as well, the population is expected to peak in 2035, and then decline, with the aging rate predicted to exceed 30% in 2040.

Additionally, during the Covid-19 pandemic, inefficient analogue benefit payment systems and congestion at administrative offices such as ward offices, exposed the delay in digitalisation in administrative bodies as a nationwide issue.

Currently, Japan is actively promoting digital transformation (DX) including the digitalisation of administrative procedures to tackle these issues.

In Fukuoka City, we have also been undergoing digitalisation of administrative services so that citizens can carry out administrative procedures such as submitting applications and applying for notifications online. As of the end of March 2023, more than 90% of these services were available online.

Digitalisation has boosted convenience for citizens and optimised the efficiency of administrative procedures. However, the digital divide, which is the gap between those who can make use of digital services and those who cannot, must also be addressed. For example, some people may not have access to, or do not know how to use technology such as computers and smartphones.

With this in mind, Japan is working on various

initiatives to achieve digitalisation where no one is left behind.

Objectives

Fukuoka City is a designated city with a population of approximately 1.64 million and an area of 343.47 square kilometres, making it the fifth largest city in Japan. The city has an excellent public transport system with major transport facilities, such as JR Hakata Station (which includes a bullet train station), Hakata Port and Fukuoka Airport, all concentrated within a 2.5-kilometre radius, linking Fukuoka City and other international and domestic destinations. Having an airport located so close to the city centre is a rarity on the global scale, and the journey from the airport to Tenjin, the city centre, only takes approximately 10 minutes, making it the fastest among 13 major cities in Asia and the third fastest among 48 major cities worldwide.

Moreover, the city is compact, allowing residents to enjoy both the sea and mountains located within just 30-minutes from the city centre. The harmonious blend of urban landscape and nature makes Fukuoka City highly appreciated as a compact and liveable city by its residents and visitors from abroad.

Despite being a compact city, Fukuoka City still has some areas that are far from the local ward offices, such as isolated islands and remote mountain regions. The digitalisation of administrative tasks will benefit residents in these remote areas, as they will

be able to complete the tasks without having to go to their ward offices.

At the same time, we have been providing a remote service counter for residents in remote areas who are less mobile due to disabilities or age, or who do not have digital devices or cannot use digital technology. We believe that our service through the remote service counter will help everyone benefit from digitalisation, thereby eliminating the digital divide.

Project Outline

In Fukuoka, a community centre is located in each elementary school district. Community centres are open to everyone in the area and serve as a hub for lifelong learning and local activities.

A remote service counter is set up by installing video call devices in these community centres. Local citizens who live in the area can connect to ward office staff face-to-face for consultations about various administrative procedures.

Features and Innovations

The remote service counter allows users to consult with administrative ward office staff, while seeing their faces online and giving users peace of mind. Residents can also share images such as documents and maps with the camera on hand, to allow for clearer instructions than by phone alone.

Additionally, the service is user-friendly. Minimal operation is required from residents as staff handle most tasks. Therefore, even elderly people and those who are not familiar with smartphones and other digital devices can use the service easily.

Furthermore, there are various features and functions of the remote service counter which are not available over the phone. One example is a digital marker function, which allows marking and highlighting of shared documents.

Results of the Project

The remote counter service is mainly provided in remote areas with a lower population, therefore the

focus should not be on quantitative results, but rather on offering a variety of accessible administrative services to the elderly and those who are not familiar with technology, in areas far from their ward offices, thereby providing them with peace of mind.

Issues, Problems and Responses

The user interface (UI) of the system is designed to be extremely simple. Users can simply tap the 'start consultation' button on the screen to begin using the service. This enables users who are not comfortable with technology to easily access this digital service.

Through the remote service counter, online applications that use the individual number card (My Number Card) to authorise identification are also supported. However, therein lies the challenge of balancing between maintaining a simple UI for those who are not confident with technology and increasing the scope of available functions.

Future Developments (expected effects and project vision and issues)

Going forward we aim to increase the number of users completing administrative tasks online by continuously improving the UI and user experience (UX) of online procedures, making the system simpler. We also strive to further bridge the digital divide by using the remote service counter, a supplementary service to the digitalisation of administrative procedures, targeted at residents in remote areas such as isolated islands, who have difficulty with using digital technologies.

Contact:

Division in Charge: Service Design Section, Digital Transformation Strategy Department, Fukuoka City General Affairs & Planning Bureau

Tel.: +81-92-711-4105

E-mail: servicedesign.GAPB@city.fukuoka.lg.jp