

Making the Case for My Easy Gov
Division: C / Category: 10 (Other)

RESEARCH/SITUATION ANALYSIS: If you drive a car or own a house, you are one of the millions of Floridians who do business each year with your local tax collector. These 67 constitutional officers who make up the Florida Tax Collector's Association (FTCA) lead the offices you go to when it's time to renew your vehicle's registration or your driver license, pay your property and business taxes or obtain a hunting or fishing license. With millions of people needing served throughout the state, lines in these offices are often long. Some services are available online through individual county websites, but it varies depending on the size and technological funding and capability in each county. The FTCA's Service Corporation is a group of eight Florida tax collectors that works under the umbrella of the FCTA to "educate, protect and support the office of the tax collector through innovation and technology to enhance the customer experience." As president of the group, in early 2018, St. Lucie County Tax Collector Chris Craft recognized the disparity that existed between various counties with regard to available services. He decided to push for a more unified, consistent and technologically advanced way for customers throughout the state to access their local tax collector offices. He initiated the concept of enhancing customer service statewide by offering a mobile application, to be called "My Easy Gov," for use in paying tax collector related fees. To gain a better understanding of the perceived need, Chris and his fellow Service Corp members surveyed 10,000 of their customers, asking questions to gather information regarding age, online habits/use and potential interest in using a mobile app to pay for tax collector services if it were made available to them. The data supported the concept, but in order to bring the idea to fruition, the Service Corp needed the buy in of the majority of FCTA's 67 members, along with a monetary commitment of several hundred thousand dollars to fund the project. Chris tasked his communications director with creating a compelling and comprehensive presentation for use in making the case for "My Easy Gov" before his FTCA colleagues at their annual summer conference in late August, 2018.

OBJECTIVES: 1.) Gather pertinent information to be included in the presentation, including survey statistics, benefits of mobile applications, graphics, logos and questions for a proactive Q & A section, and have it all compiled no later than two weeks before the conference. 2.) Garner verbal support from 34 tax collectors (51%) on the concept in the weeks leading up to the conference. 3.) Secure \$430,000 in funding (50% of the project budget and the amount needed to begin) as a result of the presentation/call to action.

IMPLEMENTATION: 1.) In the months leading up to the conference, Service Corp members reached out to several companies for proposals and agreed to utilize tech company Informa for the proposed project. A scope of

work was created based on common transactions and issues within offices as discussed by Service Corp members. Survey statistics were shared and drilled down to age demographics, internet use regarding tax collector services and payment and potential interest in a mobile app. It was also decided to use QR Codes for ease of account access, so graphics were made to illustrate how this would work, along with a list of benefits in using this technology. A logo was created for the app, and questions were gathered from tax collectors throughout the state who had concerns over the concept. All the material was ready by mid-July and then organized, placed into a PowerPoint and revised for the August conference. 2.) Through phone calls, Chris was able to secure a few supporters, but many were still not convinced that an app was necessary and were hesitant to financially commit. On August 27, Chris gave the presentation to a full room of 58 tax collectors, addressing specific questions raised by his colleagues regarding legal and logistical concerns surrounding the project. At the end of the presentation, a vote was taken, and 45 of the 58 tax collectors approved moving forward with the “My Easy Gov” project. 3.) Of those 45, most also committed financially to the project.

EVALUATION: 1.) The content of the presentation was compiled ahead of schedule. It was thorough and effective, as evidenced by the support the project received. 2.) In order for the project to move forward, the Service Corp needed at least 34 of the 67 tax collectors (or 51%) to approve. Following the presentation, 45 of the 58 in attendance (or 67% of the 67 tax collectors) supported “My Easy Gov,” which is 16% higher than the goal. 3.) The biggest hurdle to jump for the project to move forward was funding. Following the presentation, the total dollar amount committed by FCTA members toward “My Easy Gov” was \$500,000, which is 58% of the cost and 8% above the goal of \$430,000. The app is now in production and is expected to be rolled out in select test counties by fall 2019.

BUDGET: There was no budget associated with this project, other than staff time to put the actual presentation together, which totaled \$1,080 (30 hours) (including information gathering, designing the “My Easy Gov” logo and graphics for use in the presentation, compiling and revising the PowerPoint and being on hand to assist the day of the presentation).