FROM SHORTAGE TO SURPLUS

Abstract

A government department serving as the central purchasing agent, treasurer, and account and pay administrator, leveraged ServiceNow to manage skyrocketing demand and consistent distribution of critical COVID-19 response supplies and services.

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Need for essential COVID-19 response products and services

Rising COVID-19 numbers had put immense pressure on the government's infrastructure, stock of supplies, and essential support tools.

Demand for Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) products such as gloves, N95 masks, eye protection, gowns, sanitizers, test kits, thermometers, and life-supporting machinery like ventilators was being reported across the nation. Demand was also increasing for services like nursing, security, catering, accommodation, and IT support.

There were 21 items on the shortage list and the government began exploring all the possible options to secure the equipment and supplies needed to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

A flood of suppliers

The volume and speed at which the products and services were needed led the government to make a public appeal. They published a form on their procurement website asking for support from suppliers to provide goods and services for the country's response to COVID-19.

Within a day, the government received more than 26,000 unique submissions of offers from both Canadian and international businesses, and between 900 and 1,500 new and follow-up responses each day thereafter.

To determine the best suppliers, the responses needed to be acknowledged, risk-assessed, evaluated, and reported. However, the management systems in place did little more than feed the forms filled on the website into an SQL database.

This cumbersome process was the only thing that stood in the way of timely COVID-19 support.

A digital service management backbone with ServiceNow

The department worked with Infosys Public Services to build a digital solution to manage the offers and accelerate procurement - the COVID-19 Supplier Response Request Management System (C19 SRRM).

C19 SRRM is a catalogue-based supplier response request management system built on ServiceNow. The solution was a bespoke design that would process and track the entire volume of transactions in a simple and efficient manner on an ongoing basis.

It automated every possible leg of the process. The team could bulk-upload the SQL database and other sources of responses in a templatized manner straight into ServiceNow, initiating the request lifecycle.

Each request was then automatically directed to regional officers for risk assessment. If given the green light, the filtered requests were then moved along to regional directors for validation. Successful supplier selections were then passed on to procurement. All of these interactions, whether calls or mails, were recorded along the way to simplify reporting.

From shortage to surplus

Navigating the process with the new solution expedited procurement so substantially that the government went from a shortage of PPE supplies to a surplus. The surplus was so plentiful that the department even opened up its essential service contingency reserve to other government departments and public organizations as part of their safe restart initiative.

C19 SRRM was delivered for customer appraisal in just four days at absolutely no cost to the government. In addition, the department started incorporating the solution into the core electronic procurement platform, making it easier for other departments and the public of Canada to access PPE and other pandemic related services.

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