

US Cities and Counties Are Asking Their Citizens Are They “Happy Or Not?”

A growing number of municipalities and counties including the city of Atlanta, the city of Miami, Adam County, King County and Riverside County are employing the HappyOrNot® service to increase customer satisfaction levels.



Photo courtesy of Adam County Colorado

West Palm Beach, FL - [HappyOrNot®](#), the global leader in instant customer and employee satisfaction reporting, is in high demand with local governments as they search for tools to measure and improve their government services. “Local and municipal governments across the U.S. face an increasingly informed and vocal electorate. Many government officials are using the power of sentiment to improve their customer experience, accountability and transparency,” said **Heikki Väänänen, CEO and Founder** of HappyOrNot. “This is all in an effort to raise the quality of life of their citizens, enhance public perception, and address the financial impact of poor customer satisfaction.”

According to a recent column¹ published by [Governing](#), “Poor government services have real consequences that are particularly acute for businesspeople. Licensing delays can derail financing for a start-up. Misunderstanding a regulation can lead to a

restaurant owner closing down and laying off staff. Permitting problems can cost a contractor his customers and investors.”

It is no surprise that the priority for many local governments is to implement strategic plans to enhance customer service. One such example is [Adams County](#) which is using the HappyOrNot customer feedback service to do just that. The county has placed a feedback kiosk, known as a [Smiley Terminal](#)™, in their Community & Economic Development department to design the department’s service strategies around input from customers.

Adams County completed a reorganization back in July 2015, and, by mid-September, the feedback terminal was deployed. According to **Andrea Berg, Customer and Process Development Manager**, it didn’t take long for the department to quickly take ownership of the results gathered by the device. “My team routinely encourages customers to use the terminal after they have helped them. They really take pride in the service they provide. If a customer leaves gives negative feedback by pressing a red face smiley button, the team member will immediately inform me and let me know what happened. This provides a great opportunity for training by helping the team think of better options to handle a difficult situation.”

Adams County is currently working on implementing HappyOrNot’s virtual feedback service, [Web Smileys](#)™, to know how their newly introduced online system is being received by web visitors. “We recently launched a new online permitting system for building permits and initial reviews for land use cases. We want to be able to capture how well this is working or what is not working by using the Web Smileys,” she added.

Enter the Tax-Man

At [King County](#), government officials are giving their residents and business owners a chance to get involved so that they are able to serve them better. In their Treasurer’s office, they have put extra emphasis on customer service. “Sometimes we have a message that isn’t easy to deliver and can be hard for customers to take, but we can deliver it courteously and respectfully,” says **Property Tax Supervisor Mark Thompson**. The team at King County uses the HappyOrNot service to get immediate feedback to help recognize exceptional staff, learn from them, and improve the process where needed.

Customer Service as a Strategic Initiative

In 2015, the [Riverside](#) City Council endorsed seven strategic priorities, listing *Enhanced Customer Service* as the top priority. According to Lea Deesing, the Riverside's Chief Innovation Officer, the ultimate goal of employing the feedback service is to improve services, engage citizens and supplement the citywide performance measurement program.

Subsequently, Riverside's individual departments implemented HappyOrNot's customer satisfaction polling service to serve as its baseline satisfaction measurement tool. In February 2017, eleven Smiley Terminals were deployed around city hall and other locations. The city also implemented Web Smileys for its websites to help capture the online sentiment.

In addition to monitoring their external service quality, Riverside, in an effort to remain competitive with the other IT markets, has installed a Smiley Terminal in its Innovation and Technology Department to monitor internal morale. After each workday employees are able to answer anonymously, "How was your day?" The overall objective is to stay on the pulse of the department's daily work atmosphere. City of Riverside joins a growing number of private sector organizations like Microsoft, Nike, Domino's and many others in deploying HappyOrNot terminals to engage their employees and measure workplace satisfaction.

How HappyOrNot works

In a [Government Technology](#) article², Phil Pitchford, the city's communications officer stated, "The idea is that if you've gotten a permit and want to get on with the rest of your day, you probably don't want to take a 15-minute survey and we most likely won't get a response." He continued, "It's something, you can do your business at city hall, push a button and leave." Some examples of what the city wants to know from its constituents, both in-person and online, include:

- Please rate our customer service
- Please rate our registration process
- Please rate the ease of finding information
- How satisfied are you with your library services today?
- Please rate our website

Residents and business owners answer these questions by simply pressing a button ranging from very happy (dark green smiley face) to very unhappy (dark red smiley face). Every time someone presses one of the buttons, the data is fed wirelessly to a

web-based collection and reporting system to chart how well city employees are serving the public. Performance results are emailed at the end of every day and are available 24/7 via the HappyOrNot reporting portal. The cloud-based reporting service includes “tampering filters” that are designed to “filter out” children playing with the buttons or employees attempting to game the system.

The HappyOrNot service is proving to be a good fit for many other cities like Atlanta, Miami, Redding, Las Cruces, and Kettering, and counties like Washoe and Clackamas - to name a few. Municipal and county governments can quickly monitor customer satisfaction levels, create reports for improving government processes, monitor and improve employee engagement and, ultimately, improve the quality of life of their citizens. “Riverside takes customer service very seriously, and HappyOrNot is a great tool to document the satisfaction level of the public,” **Mayor Rusty Bailey** said. “I look forward to seeing the data in terms of how well we are doing and where we can improve.”

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About HappyOrNot

HappyOrNot® is the global leader in instant customer and employee satisfaction reporting. Our innovative feedback collecting smileys and intelligent data analytics reporting service help our clients to improve their customer experience, relationships, and employee engagement. We serve nearly 4,000 companies across 117 countries and have collected and reported on over a half billion feedbacks.

Official Riverside Media Assets:

[B-Roll Footage](#)

[City Council Presentation Video](#)

¹William Eggers and Greg Pellegrino, "The Customer-Experience Prescription for Government," *Governing*, October 18, 2016

²Theo Douglas, "Through Data, Customers Tell Riverside If They're 'Happy Or Not', *Government Technology*, March 17, 2017