

End-user promotion examples in the new service strategy in the municipality of Syddjurs

A description of how the building permit process in the municipality of Syddjurs was improved by the egoprise process modelling, and how the end user promotion of the changes in the process were integrated in the overall end user promotion of the new service strategy in the municipality of Syddjurs; end users being in this instance companies and citizens in the municipality.



Background:

In 2010, the Municipality of Syddjurs started an innovation process with the aim of reducing administrative costs among other things by optimizing administrative processes and the communication channels with the citizens. One of the means for reaching this goal has been to examine the services rendered by the municipality in its citizen's service department to companies and citizens. Included in the examination was a feasibility study of increased digitalization of the processes. The aim was to go from a situation where 4 % of the services were undertaken via self-service by companies and citizens to 30 % by the end of 2012, and finally, to 50-80 % in 2015.

The egoprise project started in 2009, and in 2010, Syddjurs decided, within the scope of the egoprise project, to look at ways to improve the building permit and pension application processes and to combine the implementation and the end user promotion of the new ways with the initiatives planned for the overall citizen's service.¹ Before the egoprise process modelling, the case processing time for building permits was very long, up till 66 days, which caused some controversy with local building companies and citizens.

The Building Permit Application Process

The situation before the process modelling:

A building permit is required for any new construction, or any remodelling that changes the structure from its original condition. Prior to starting any construction work on a property, the landowner must obtain a building permit from the local municipality. The municipality must investigate whether the proposed construction work contravenes with other legislation. If so, a building permit

¹This chapter will focus on the building permit application process as the pension permit process is described elsewhere: The Syddjurs process modeling work formed part of the overall egoprise project process analyses as described in project output: "Modeling of Selected Processes – Results of the Analysis and Recommendations".

may not be granted until the problem has been resolved either by a change in the project or by exemption from the applicable legislation.

Before the process modelling, the client submitted the application documents to the service group of the building department. After registering the application, the municipal officer checked the completeness of the documents. If all relevant documents had been received, the municipal officer checked whether other departments/authorities (e.g. National Conservation Authority) had to be included. If so the municipal officer asked for opinion.

Then the case was processed in the building department. The case officer checked all relevant subject matters (e.g. the building law, local land-use plans) and decided whether other departments would have to be included in the permission process. This might be relevant in spite of the check of the officer in the service group. After handling the case, the case officer made the decision. The case officer created the permit for the applicant about the approval or the rejection of the application and the notification of charges.

After receiving the building permission, the client has to complete and to submit the form for commencement of the building. The next step after completion is to submit the notification of completion. During the permission process all relevant data in the BBR are updated regularly.

The aim of the process modelling:

In connection with the egoprise project process modelling, Syddjurs decided to have a look at the building permit application process with the aim of:

- Improving citizen service
- Reducing processing time
- Minimizing the risk of mistakes

In August 2011, Friederike Thessel, external expert from IfG.CC - The Potsdam eGovernment Competence Center , went through the administrative process involved in applying for a building permit in Syddjurs. The process modelling entailed working with cards symbolizing each part of the application process, and revealed:

- Recurring processes
- Risks of delays
- Risk of "blind alleys"



Friederike Thessel and her cards at work together with municipal staff in Syddjurs, August 2011.

In brief, as regards end user contacts, the recommendations for Syddjurs were:

Access to the administration and the application phase: A special service point for building affairs.

Workflow during processing of applications: Optimization of the part of the process where the client submits the application.

The above two recommendations were to be incorporated in the new citizen's service strategy of Syddjurs, and end users, companies and citizens were to be made aware of it.

End user promotion of new service solutions

The concept

The above recommendations for changes fit in well with the overall design of the new service concept in Syddjurs, which basically deals with a change in the Syddjurs service concept, from a situation where the municipality delivered solutions to companies and citizens to a situation where the companies and citizens receive help to find a solution, and with the goal of reaching a situation where the companies and citizens find a solution themselves, and only in problematic cases get help from the municipality. The entire concept is, of course, based on digital e-government solutions.

Regarding end user promotion, the strategy has below 3 main pillars:

1. Self Service

Focus on constant development/implementation of the best self-service solutions for the homepage.

Focus on staff training for mainstreaming the use of the self-service solutions.

Focus on training of the companies/citizens in the use of the self-service solutions.

2. On-line Service

Focus on help for self-service via online channels: Chat, telephone, and video

Focus on online contact to the case officer (“Who is your case officer”)

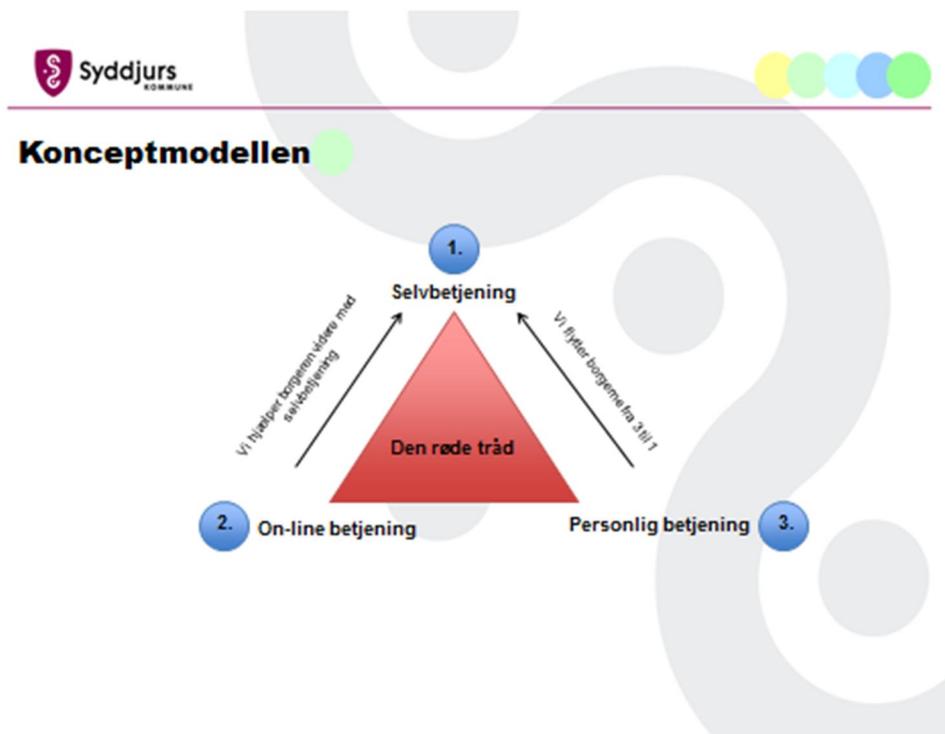
Focus on first call replies to questions from citizens (Citizens Guide)

3. Personal Service

Focus on assistance for self-service

Focus on help for and counselling of the citizens, who cannot become digital

Focus on personal and individual service



Above table is a graph showing the concept and its main goal: to train end users, citizens and companies, to find solutions via self-service.

The process

The primary element of the process is the end user promotion, and the key word in the process is “assisted self-service”. Basically, it is a change away from the old ways, where citizens and companies queued up at the counter in the municipality, handed in their case, and waited for the case officer to turn up with a solution; to a situation where the case officer cooperates with the end user to find a solution, and in the process, the end user learns about the use of the digital self-service offers.

The old counter has been removed from the Syddjurs citizens' service department. Instead, there is an assisted self-service counter, not very different from the assisted self-service counters that are seen in many airports today. To ensure that the citizen does not have to search for service, the assisted self-service counter is placed close to the entrance, and the citizen is met by a Syddjurs officer on his or her way in to the area.

In the assisted self-service area, all functions are digital and based on an objective approach: "We help you find a solution on your own". In the assisted self-service area, the citizen can either go through the entire process alone, or get help according to needs, or be guided all the way by a municipal officer, and in this way become familiar with the use of digital self-service solutions. The assisted self-service area is designed for giving the user a feeling of maximum discretion and safety: There are no walking lines behind the assisted self-service stations, and a screen ensures discretion. There are a sufficient number of assisted self-service stations to make sure that there are no queues. Specialists from the back-office areas can be contacted from the assisted self-service stations.



The picture shows a Syddjurs officer at work in an assisted self-service station in Syddjurs. The municipal catch phrase in connection with the process was: "yesterday, we did it for you – today, we do it together – and, tomorrow, you do it on your own"

Important aspects in the manning of assisted self-service counters:

The area with the assisted self-service counters is constantly manned, either by a regular team or by a rotation of a major group of case officers. The work stations in the area are used by the staff in connection with case work that they can do in between their work in the assisted self-service counters. The work stations can also be used if, in connection with assisting a citizen, the staff needs to look into a specific subject matter system, or the assistance needed is better solved from there. However, the primary task of the officer is always to assist the citizens in the self-service functions – not to do case work.



Municipal staff in Syddjurs at the work stations – but still keeping in mind that rule number one is to assist citizens in self-service functions.

The individual approach – personal service

The need for personal service arises when the citizen’s task cannot be dealt with by self-service or assisted self-service. This can be citizens arriving for scheduled meetings, or cases that need special case work and which cannot be handled immediately.

Typically, service in these cases will be via a reception function, which can also handle the booking of meetings, receive meeting participants for scheduled and unscheduled meetings. This part of the new concept has not yet been tested in Syddjurs.

Results concerning new procedures regarding building permits in the new service concept:



Access to the administration and the application phase
A special service point for building affairs.

Quick answers



On the municipality homepage



Get help by hotline



The slide illustrates the functioning of the “Kvik svar” (Quick answer).

The assisted self-service approach, as described above also covers building applications. Today, the field is only digitalized to a small extent, but a national solution with increased digitalization is being developed and will be ready for implementation in 2013. The new solution is expected to fit in well with the assisted self-service solution described above.

To increase end user skills on and to make end users feel more secure as regards assisted self-service in building permit cases, Syddjurs has, prior to the assisted self-service solution, and in thread with the service concept , worked on below aspect:

As many objective replies as possible (replies that do not involve the decision of a case officer) are made easily available on the homepage. They can be found via "Kviksvar" (Quick answer), where end users or officers assisting end users can easily find replies to frequently asked questions in connection with building permit applications. Included in the solution is also the possibility for the municipal call centre, if the call is electronic, to send a link to the reply on the homepage and thereby strengthen the end user's capability to use homepage and Kviksvar rather than making a personal call in the assisted self-service centre.

Conclusions – so far

As mentioned, Syddjurs has not finished testing and implementing all aspects of the new service concept, but the evaluations made so far show that end users as well as municipal officers are satisfied with the new system, and the goals set for end user self-service are within easy reach, even if we are only still in mid-2012. The incorporation of the recommendations from the process modelling also seems to work well, the average case processing time for building permits having gone from 66 days to just 9 days, which is a rather impressive result.

