

Redesign of the MijnOverheid website using life events as structure

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Background

Osage is an agency that helps service providers offer the right service. Their services include service design, content and brand strategies, visual identity design, experience design and copywriting. They have a vision for changing digital public government services; what if digital services are not organized based on the structure within the government, but based on what the citizen needs? Osage would like to develop this vision as a feasible plan for the future of digital services and deliver it to the Dutch government.

This vision was implemented in the redesign of one specific digital platform; the website 'MijnOverheid', a personal website for citizens. The purpose of this redesign is to illustrate (to the Dutch government or possible future partners) what Osage's vision would look like in practice and to function as a basis for interface frameworks of other digital service platforms.

The final design focuses on achieving three objectives in the customer journey; proactive, citizen-centric and user-friendly. Following these goals, the main research question is as follows:

How can the MijnOverheid website be redesigned with life events as a structure so that it provides a more proactive, citizen-centric, user-friendly customer journey?

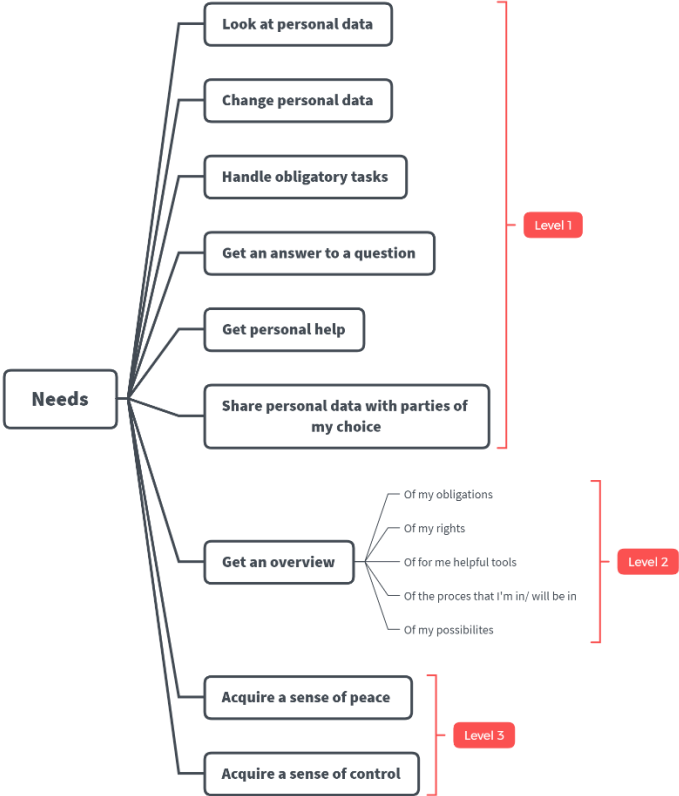
Approach

The theoretical background was researched of the current situation of digital government service provision. After this, interviews were held with people who had gone through the life events of 'turning 18' and 'becoming unemployed', to evaluate different needs that these interviewees had, during the whole process. The results of these specific cases were analysed to get a more general idea about needs from digital service provision during very different life events.

After discovering and defining the state of the current situation of digital public services, and of requirements and needs of digital public services, the design process began. The prototype was then tested by a group of experts, and compared to earlier set design requirements.





Results – an analysis of needs

General needs that kept coming back can be summarized in the infographic below.



Level 1 contains actions that are seen as a minimum for platforms. Level 2 is about obtaining an overview. Level 3 contains positive feelings that people can get from using a platform.

Needs also differed between different life events. By making an overview of all common life events and matching emotions and needs to these life events, four quadrants of life event needs could be established.

Needs during life events	A. HAPPENS TO YOU	B. YOU INITIATE IT
1. YOU SEE IT COMING	Think of: retiring Minimal amount of actions Fitting information provision Overview of the obligatory actions beforehand Mood: indifferent, 'this is something that I HAVE to do' 	Think of: Registered partnership Lots of information Overview of obligatory and possible steps and choices beforehand Mood: receptive, interested, looking for the fitting services 
2. YOU DO NOT SEE IT COMING	Think of: parent dies Clear overview of the obligatory actions Personal help / advice Only minimal needed information Mood: stressed, sad, 'I don't want to be in this situation' 	Think of: divorcing Overview of obligatory and possible steps and choices Fitting information provision Mood: stressed, practical, 'I want to arrange everything quickly' 

Results of ideation and conceptualization phase

How information could be organized, and which information included on the MijnOverheid website, was explored through sketches and information taxonomies. After consultation with Osage, it was decided to go for the life events taxonomy. This would best help with bringing up the right services at the right times.

The idea of the life events taxonomy was as follows: To offer services and information based on the common life events that were established. In practice, this would work as follows: if you are on a (non-logged in) information page called 'work' or 'unemployed' you can press a button, for example, 'I have become unemployed, what now?'. After which you go through a questionnaire and log in to MijnOverheid, which then puts all the right resources together on one page. An example of a useful tool on such a page would be a personalized to-do list, with deadlines.

A prototype was made based on this taxonomy idea. It worked based on the scenario that a partner has passed away, and the wife of the partner needs to make all administrative affairs in order now. She first goes through pages with questions that are meant to personalize the main page. The she gets to the main page, where she finds an overview of her situation, a personal checklists of tasks still to complete, and frequently asked questions.

Results of usability tests

During usability testing, problems were found with the main page being too long, the menu bar being illogical, and the platform not being accessible enough for extreme users. Users did feel in control and were satisfied with the use experience (SUS ("System Usability Scale (SUS) | Usability.gov," n.d.) score of 81%).

Comparing the prototype to the requirements also showed that it lacked a bit in user friendliness according to Nielsen's Heuristics (Nielsen, 2020), and that automation of processes still has to be achieved more in order to achieve a proactive service provision.

Conclusion

The final design is a website that provides personalized overviews, but is not yet as far as to proactively help people with their tasks.

Using life events as explicit structure for how to offer digital government services is a good basis, as it is very citizen-centric. However, the tested prototype is not perfect yet, as has been shown through the feedback of experts testing the prototype.

Life events of all quadrants of the model need to be tested to see how well they fit with the specific needs, and the level of personalization and proactivity needs to be evaluated based on what is possible within the current political environment.

References

Nielsen, J. (2020, November 15). 10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design. Retrieved January 22, 2021, from <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/>
System Usability Scale (SUS) | Usability.gov. (n.d.). Retrieved January 22, 2021, from <https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/system-usability-scale.html>