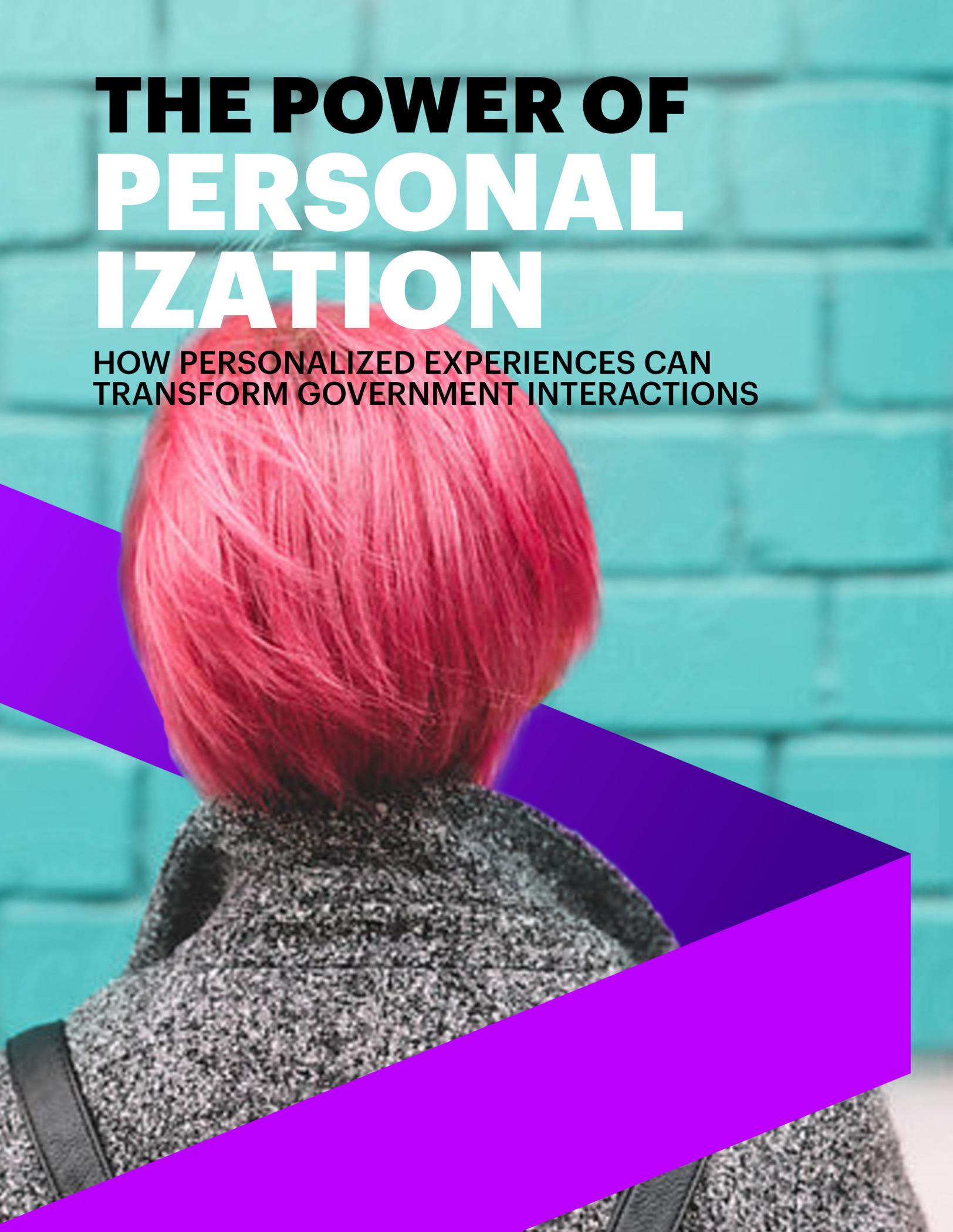


# **THE POWER OF PERSONALIZATION**

**HOW PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCES CAN  
TRANSFORM GOVERNMENT INTERACTIONS**



# Leading commercial organizations are delivering exceptional customer experiences. These digitally enabled personalized experiences are improving service quality while driving down delivery cost. And they are strengthening customer engagement and satisfaction.

New Accenture research shows that citizens increasingly expect commercial-caliber experiences from government. In fact, a 2016 Accenture Public Service Pulse Survey found that 85 percent of citizens expect the same or higher quality from government digital services as from commercial organizations.<sup>1</sup> That marks a rapid increase from the 2014 survey—when just 73 percent of citizens said they expected government to meet or beat commercial standards.

The research underscores the reality that people in today’s digital world have one set of standards for service providers. No longer differentiating by source—retailers, banks, transportation providers, or government—customers’ expectations are like water flowing freely across all aspects of their lives. These “liquid expectations” represent a sea change for marketing in commercial sectors—and for customer engagement in government.<sup>2</sup>

Whether citizens, veterans, employees, military service members, or other customers of federal agencies, users expect the same level of interaction, transparency, and simplicity from government that they have in their everyday lives. Increasingly, individuals want personalized experiences that reflect their needs and preferences and that can adapt over time as their circumstances or desires change. In Accenture’s 2014 Public Services Pulse Survey, 40 percent of citizens cited a personalized digital experience as valuable. By 2016, more than half (54 percent) pointed to the importance of personalization.<sup>3</sup>



The goal of personalization is to use data to make it easier for customers to find and consume what they want, how and when they want it. Personalization dynamically interprets an individual's intent and uniquely tailors communications and experiences to help them achieve that intent as quickly, easily, and pleasantly as possible, across digital and physical touchpoints, at scale. Personalization can cover a broad range of capabilities—from self-service to assisted digital experiences to outbound and inbound marketing to learn more about a customer's intent. Some examples include:

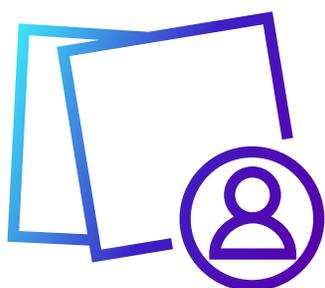
**Transactions**—A secure portal where a customer can employ a user name and password to interact with government. Personalized content can be offered to make transactional experiences simpler and more seamless.

**Customer Service**—Virtual agents that interact directly with customers. These agents can use personalized content to guide customers toward solutions to stated needs.

**Inbound Marketing**—Capture of opt-in preferences. These insights enable agencies to communicate and deliver content to customers the way they prefer (for example, email or text messaging).

Contrary to popular belief, OMB Policy M-10-22—*Guidance for Online Use of Web Measurement and Customization Technologies*—allows federal agencies to offer personalized experiences under specific circumstances. These terms include openly communicating their privacy and related policies, requiring explicit consent to use and share personally identifiable information (PII), and providing clear opt-out mechanisms. Ultimately, providing this higher level of transparency helps foster trust in government, including a greater willingness by citizens to more proactively engage with federal agencies.

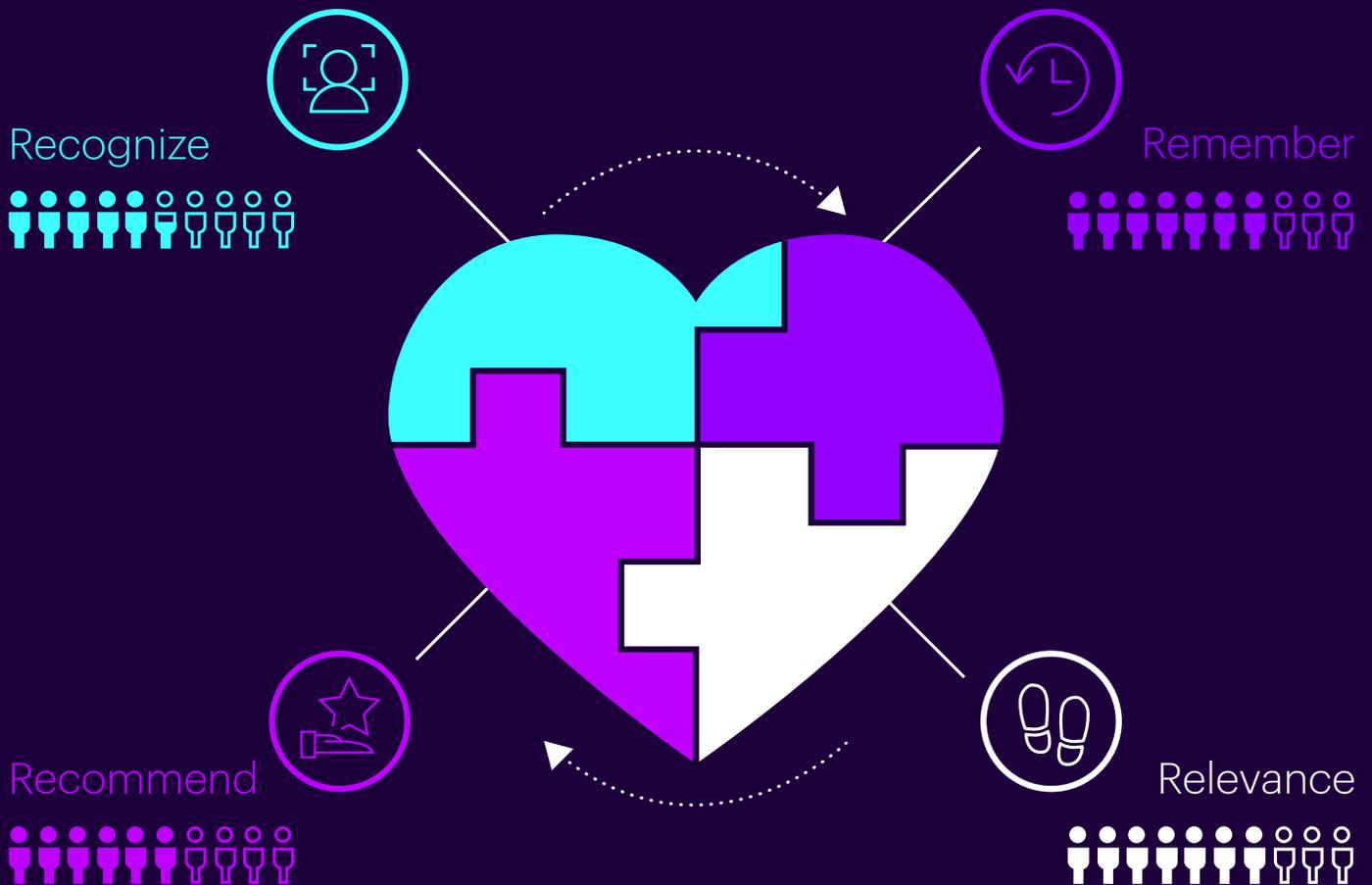
For agencies, implementing effective personalized experiences will be an ongoing journey, and many agencies may be uncertain where and how to start. To determine how best to move forward with personalization initiatives that add value while meeting federal requirements for privacy and security, agencies should consider four steps to personalization: Recognize, Remember, Recommend and Relevance.<sup>4</sup> This 4R Personalization Framework offers a practical approach to exploring opportunities.



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**Personalization is the act of dynamically curating experiences to each individual and context in a seamless manner across all interactions and channels.**

As agencies explore the capabilities and technologies they need to deliver personalized experiences at scale, it is crucial to consider how to recognize, remember, recommend, and be relevant to all government “customers.”



## 4R Personalization Framework

### **Recognize:**

Identify customers and new audiences

### **Remember:**

Use previous activity to anticipate future needs

### **Recommend:**

Present the most relevant content, services, and products

### **Relevance:**

Consider the customer context

## Recognize: Identify customers and new audiences

While not all users will participate, many federal websites would benefit from providing regular visitors with an opportunity to identify their own needs and preferences. Depending on the scenario, opt-in participation could encompass general information, such as basic demographics and location, and/or user-specific data drawn (with permission) from account or CRM systems. By recognizing the user, agencies can provide services in a more seamless and integrated fashion, eliminate errors and miscommunications, and build greater confidence in the validity of the engagement or transaction.

## Remember: Use previous activity to anticipate future needs

By remembering users in a way that complies with privacy laws and regulations, federal agencies can consistently foster goodwill and improve the customer experience. People expect organizations to value their time and make them feel important by delivering personalized experiences that reflect their preferences and priorities. Remembering previous activity to anticipate future needs demonstrates that agencies are paying attention. Customers, in turn, feel valued and gain trust in government.

Under OMB M-10-22, federal agencies can use anonymous (non-PII) tracking of both single and repeat visitors to deliver improved site personalization. This is considered either a *Tier 1—single session* or *Tier 2—multi-session without PII* usage tier, both of which must be clearly identified in the privacy policy and supported with readily accessible opt-out mechanisms. Tracking can enable simple but useful features, such as identifying previously used hyperlinks and navigation through automated site configuration or other capabilities. A recommended best practice is use of the now common “this website employs cookies” pop-up homepage banner.

## Recommend: Present the most relevant content, services, and products

Recommended content is a standard part of today’s digital consumer experience, and most customers appreciate its convenience and relevance. For most federal agencies, recommending content within their own website is a reasonable place to start.

With appropriate user consent, personalization can help surface content that is relevant or critical to completing a task at one agency but is also directly tied to a process managed by another. In doing so, personalization can help significantly improve the overall customer journey. Consider, for example, that the U.S. Department of Agriculture manages SNAP benefits and free and reduced lunch, while the Department of Health and Human Services administers benefits for women and children. Enhanced personalization can help drive stronger cross-agency linkages by proactively recommending relevant content from related programs—supporting not just higher satisfaction for customers but also greater operational efficiency, enhanced accuracy, and lower cost to serve for agencies.

Agencies can use adaptive business rules and analytics to assess and anticipate user needs and make recommendations based on those needs as well as other interests or related behaviors. For example, an agency might recommend filling out Form Y if a user is filling out related Form X. Personalizing experiences in this manner enables agencies to serve users more efficiently—streamlining the process and enhancing customer satisfaction while improving mission outcomes.

## Relevance: Consider the customer context

Digital government is all about making federal services available and accessible to all citizens—anytime, anywhere, from any device. Through the use of context- and location-aware content, federal agencies can do a better job of connecting with people where they are. Context may include a variety of data points—from current location, time of day/year, and local weather to the user’s access channel, journey stage, and other details that may clarify their intent. The good news: Customers are generally comfortable (70 percent) with collecting personal data as long as the business is transparent on how they use it. This improves to 75 percent if customers have control on how and when it is used.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to helping citizens find the public services they need, when and where they need them, personalization tools offer federal agencies the added advantage of reaching new populations. If, for example, an agency is trying to increase enrollment in a certain benefit, and that benefit applies to people of a specific demographic who are concentrated in a particular zip code, the agency can geo-target the enrollment content and messaging to the people who need it most.

**70%**



of customers are generally comfortable with collecting personal data

# Personalization potential

Imagine the possibilities for personalization of federal services:

- A personalized digital dashboard from the IRS that delivers simple and easy access to an individual's refund status, historical tax records, relevant tax forms and publications, and notification of relevant new tax law changes, all in one place
- VA mobile app that recommends a nearby clinic based on the user's search for care
- Integration between the State Department, U.S. Postal Service, and U.S. Treasury that alerts when a passport is nearing expiration—and simplifies the renewal process
- Using citizen-provided zip codes to deliver information on services or facilities available in those areas or to provide location-specific data that relates to their interests

## Power up: How to get started

While every agency is at a different point in the journey to personalized experiences, all share compelling opportunities to improve communication and engagement with customers—whether citizens, taxpayers, visitors, or employees.

Some agencies are considering user-centered design with segment-specific and intention-based navigation. Others have made significant progress in delivering against such a vision. For example, borrowers have individual logins to the [studentloans.gov](https://studentloans.gov) site, affording a basic level of personalization, and the U.S. Census Bureau has developed a comprehensive web content management

system to set the stage for advanced personalization. Other agencies are now making curated content recommendations based on what a customer is currently searching and viewing.

In order to serve the American public efficiently and effectively, agencies can use personalization to engage citizens and better achieve mission goals. With reasonable investment and use of proven technologies and solutions, personalization can help agencies deliver the breakthrough outcomes citizens expect from their 21st century government.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Accenture Public Service Pulse Survey  
—Digital Expectations, 4/7/2016

<sup>2</sup> Living Services: The next wave in the digitization of everything, <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insight-living-services-from-accenture-digital?src=SOMS>

<sup>3</sup> Accenture Public Service Pulse Survey  
—Digital Expectations, 4/7/2016

<sup>4</sup> Propelling Growth through Personalization, <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/service-propelling-growth-through-personalization?src=SOMS>

<sup>5</sup> Accenture Interactive Marketing Pulse Personalization Survey, 2016

## ABOUT ACCENTURE FEDERAL SERVICES

Accenture Federal Services is a wholly owned subsidiary of Accenture LLP, a U.S. company, with offices in Arlington, Va. Accenture's federal business has served every cabinet-level department and 30 of the largest federal organizations. Accenture Federal Services transforms bold ideas into breakthrough outcomes for clients at civilian, public safety, defense, intelligence, and military health organizations.

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