

2010



# Open Government Research Report



June 30, 2010

## 2010 OPEN GOVERNMENT RESEARCH REPORT

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The impact of the internet, social networks and forums has undoubtedly led to a society of transparency and openness. While transparency is not a term typically associated with the U.S. government, President Obama has also reinforced the need for true openness, “ushering in a new era of open and accountable government meant to bridge the gap between the American people and their government.” On December 8, 2009, the White House even issued the Open Government Directive requiring federal agencies “to take immediate, specific steps to achieve key milestones in transparency, participation, and collaboration.”\*

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government is  
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Obama’s mandate.

Is the government making strides in this movement? Aside from being open, is it easier to interact with the government? According to the 2010 Open Government Research Report, a Harris Interactive® study commissioned by RightNow, nearly 60 percent of constituents (57 percent) don’t think the U.S. government is serious about this mandate to be more open with citizens. The report also takes a deep look at how constituents believe government agencies can improve communications, how they hope to be able to engage with government agencies in the future, and how long they believe it will take agencies to catch up with businesses in their use of the Web and social networks.

## ENGAGING WITH THE GOVERNMENT

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96 percent of respondents said the government could improve how they engage with citizens. Constituents suggested that government agencies could take simple steps to better engage by:

- 71% said improving search functionality on agencies’ websites
- 52% said creating an agency-branded forum or online community
- 34% said increasing their presence on social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter
- 32% said delivering tailored information via mobile devices

The 2010 Open Government Research Report also shows constituents prefer the phone, specifically speaking to a live agent, to engage with government (83 percent). Accessing the government online (which includes email, forums and communities, chat, and social networking) was a close second at 77 percent. Not surprisingly, the 18-34 demographic prefers engaging with the government online (92 percent), to phone (87 percent) or in-person (79 percent) interactions.

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Today's constituents are more comfortable online and engaging in social networks than ever before; 54 percent have interacted with the government online or via social networks. Constituents choose to connect with government agencies online for the following reasons:

- 86% to be able to connect on their own time, not when government offices are open
- 80% to receive information or answers to questions faster
- 72% to receive more detailed information
- 49% to support or advocate for the agency's mission or the work they do

Nearly 70 percent of constituents (69 percent) think that governments should prioritize use of online social media tools as a way to be more open with citizens. Commercial organizations have seen a lot of success with leveraging social networks, forums and blogs to better engage with customers, but many constituents (43 percent) think it will take the government 1-5 years to catch up to commercial organizations in terms of using technology to interact with citizens...if they can do it at all (22 percent think the government never will).

### HOW ARE CITIZEN'S REACTING?

The 2010 Open Government Research Report found that 69 percent of constituents said they have had a negative experience with a U.S. government agency. When constituents have had a negative experience with a government organization, complaining to others about the bad experience was the top reaction (58 percent), and of those that complained, word of mouth (98 percent) was the number one way they voiced their frustration. 15 percent responded by leaving a comment on a website, 11 percent reacted by commenting on a social network and only 6 percent wrote a blog post.

Other reactions to negative experiences with a government agency included complaining to the agency directly (39 percent), followed closely by downright cursing (31 percent), shouting (24 percent), and vowing never to do business with that agency again (24 percent).

### SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This 2010 Open Government Research Report was conducted via phone interviews within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of RightNow Technologies between March 11-14, 2010 among 1,007 adults age 18 years or older residing within the continental United States. Results were weighted as needed for age, sex, race/ethnicity, and region.

### ABOUT HARRIS INTERACTIVE

Harris Interactive is one of the world's leading custom market research firms, leveraging research, technology, and business acumen to transform relevant insight into actionable foresight. Known widely for the Harris Poll and for pioneering innovative research methodologies, Harris offers expertise in a wide range of industries including healthcare, technology, public affairs, energy, telecommunications, financial services, insurance, media, retail, restaurant, and consumer package goods. Serving clients in over 215 countries and territories through our North American, European, and Asian offices and a network of independent market research firms, Harris Interactive specializes in delivering research solutions that help us - and our clients - stay ahead of what's next. For more information, please visit [www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com).

### ABOUT RIGHTNOW GOVERNMENT

RightNow is a leader in bringing customer experience solutions delivered via a secure cloud to government clients and has successfully served the U.S. government for more than ten years. 170 government clients have already implemented RightNow including Center for Medicaid Services, Department of Agriculture, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Energy, Department of State, Department of Treasury, Department of Veterans Affairs, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Aviation Administration, General Services Administration, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Social Security Administration, United States Postal Service, American Forces Information System, Defense Travel Management Office, Future Combat Systems, National Security Agency, and United States Marine Corps to name a few.

### ABOUT RIGHTNOW

RightNow is helping rid the world of bad experiences one consumer interaction at a time, seven million times a day. RightNow CX, the customer experience suite, helps organizations deliver exceptional customer experiences across the web, social networks and contact centers, all delivered via the cloud. With more than eight billion customer interactions delivered, RightNow is the customer experience fabric for nearly 2000 organizations around the globe. To learn more about RightNow, go to [www.rightnow.com](http://www.rightnow.com).

\*Open Government website <http://www.whitehouse.gov/open/about>

“Constituents” refers to U.S. adults ages 18+ (n=1,007).