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(ii) Gathering user feedback from web sites

Methods to improve scb.se with a user perspective

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I. Background

1. Statistics Sweden launched a new website in the spring of 2009. The project to create a new website included the important components of so-called personas and focus groups. Follow-up to see how scb.se functions is done continuously and small adjustments are of course done regularly. This paper describes the methods we use to collect and analyse viewpoints and behaviour of users in order to improve our website.

II. Methods for user feedback

2. Statistics Sweden uses several different methods to obtain information about changes that should be made to the website and other communication channels. These methods include questionnaires, statistics, direct contacts and the knowledge based on our central Customer Service about problems that users have and their views.

III. Customer and user surveys

3. Statistics Sweden conducts a number of different surveys to obtain the viewpoints and needs of customers and users.

- Our larger paying customers receive a web questionnaire so we can find out about what they are satisfied with and not satisfied with. We receive a number of viewpoints about the website and how the information is presented.
- Intermittent in-depth interviews are also done with our paying customers.
- A sample survey to the general public is done every other year to find out how many people know about Statistics Sweden, their level of confidence in us as a government agency, and the channels they use to obtain the statistics.

- For every assignment over EUR 1 000, a web survey is sent asking customers to rate our service based on various aspects. However, viewpoints on the website seldom are provided via this survey.
- For a few weeks we had a short questionnaire on the website where we asked users for their viewpoints about the website. The portal was on the start page, but unfortunately we did not get very many answers.

IV. Statistics on visits and search words

4. The website includes a service for statistics about visitors so that we can see how many visits are made on different pages, documents that are opened and how people navigate from page to page. This provides us with useful information about what many visitors are looking for and difficulties visitors have in finding information. By analysing the web statistics, we have concluded that our tab "Finding Statistics" works as planned, i.e. to make it easier for users to find data they are looking for. We can also see that many of the visitors that have opened a press release leave the website afterwards, which can be interpreted that they have found what they were looking for. Correspondingly, we also look at the most common search words, where there may be possibilities to highlight the most requested statistics and the most useful functions.

V. Statistics about use

5. The channels that users go through to find statistics interact and it is also important to look at how statistics on use are developed. Unfortunately, we had problems collecting our website usage statistics, so we are missing the website statistics for 2008 and 2009. We also changed our website usage statistics methodology so it is difficult to analyse the statistics over time. But statistics on the use of the statistical database are comparable over time and we see a sharp increase in the number of retrievals as from 2009. According to our analysis the increase is due to two reasons: 1) The new website launched in 2009 made it easier to find information, and 2) Centralisation of Customer Service led to a sharper focus on teaching users to find information in the statistical database.

VI. Customer service - acting as users

6. Since 2008, Statistics Sweden has centralised questions about statistics to a central Customer Service. Previously each statistics unit had their own key telephone numbers and on-call schedule. Today 3 to 4 persons are on-call from 09:00-16.30. In 2010, some 19 000 telephone calls and 8 000 e-mail enquiries were handled. Customer Service strives to give help to self-help and guides the user to the right page, publication or table. A user survey that was done in autumn of 2010 showed that those who used Customer Service were very satisfied. We have also direct contact with media, who also provide valuable input to what needs to be improved.

7. This of course provides us with considerable knowledge about what the users cannot find or other problems that occur when visiting the website. Thus, a central Customer Service provides very important input about how the website needs to be changed. This is an important benefit from having a central Customer Service, providing that one creates the right organisation for it.

8. At Statistics Sweden we have a permanent working group with representatives for Customer Service and those groups who are responsible for the structure of the website and the editorial contents. Viewpoints are collected from Customer Service that come up in conversations with customers and are then listed on a joint activity list where the working group decides on action to be taken and on what items that need further investigation. The group meets about 5-6 times per year. Examples of activities are:

- New portals for publications
- Bookmarks in PDF files
- Who is responsible for contact information
- Standardised marketing in e-mails based on news from the website
- Compilation of all indexes
- Indicators on the start page based on what is most frequently requested

VII. User council etc.

9. Statistics Sweden has a council with users who focus on external communication. The website and other external channels are regularly discussed and we receive a considerable amount of input on what we need to improve on. The representation in the council for external communication is based on the target groups that we have identified for Statistics Sweden's communication. There are also other user councils that sometimes have viewpoints on this and the minutes from these meetings are reviewed. We have also used focus groups, mainly to test new website structures.

VIII. Continued work

10. It is a considerable advantage to have all customer and user surveys collected in one department. This gives us the opportunity for optimal planning of the surveys that need to be done. By analysing Statistics Sweden's target groups and the information we have, we can choose which surveys that are most important to do. During the autumn of 2011, we will be making in-depth interviews with some of the target groups for which we need more information about how they use the statistics and the website.

11. It is very important to see that the results from all types of customer and user surveys (regardless if they are based on statistics, questionnaires or direct customer contacts) are used to improve our operations. Those who work with customer contacts and customer surveys are also those who work to make the necessary changes. On the management level, it is, of course, important to use these reports in our operational planning.