BizPaL Qualitative Research 2007

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Background

- **BizPaL is an online service www.bizpal.ca that simplifies the business permit and licence process for entrepreneurs, governments, and third party business service providers.**

- **BizPaL is delivered by a partnership of federal, provincial/territorial and municipal government organizations working together to make it easier for business to comply with government regulatory requirements.**

- **BizPaL partners envision a truly national service, and in May 2006 agreed that growth is key to sustaining and improving the BizPaL service.**
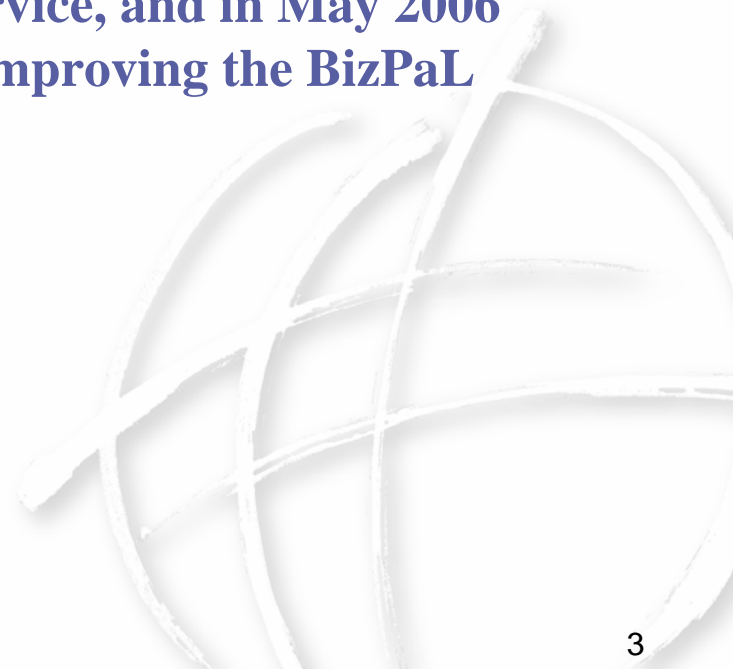
Research Objectives

- **Since further expansion of the partnership and scope of information are the two main areas of focus for the near future, Ipsos Reid was hired to help further define the evolution of BizPaL by conducting client experience research end users - existing and new businesses operating in Canada. More specifically the research was intended to gain a better understanding of end-users impressions of the usability of the BizPaL product, including:**
  - The user interface design - layout, features, ease of navigation, comparison of two technology interfaces (Iframe vs. Halton model);
  - Accessibility - location of service within partner websites;
  - Data content - comprehensive, readability, organization, completeness;
  - The value of the BizPaL service to potential business clients, including needs and expectations related to business permits and licences;
  - The usefulness and quality of the service in obtaining multi-jurisdictional permits and licences;
  - The presentation - appeal of design, branding, recognition; and
  - The overall satisfaction with the integrated service.

Methodology

- **Focus Groups and Interactive User Interviews**
  - 12 two-hour focus groups and 14 one-hour Interactive User Interviews (IUIs) conducted in 6 cities across Canada (Vancouver, Whitehorse, Saskatoon, London, Quebec City and Halifax). Quebec City focus groups and IUIs were carried out in French, in all other locations, research was conducted in English.
  - In all, seven varying treatments of the BizPaL web service were reviewed.
  - In each location, Ipsos-Reid recruited 12 participants for each group in order to ensure eight to ten participants.
  - Groups were conducted between April 17th and April 25th, 2007

- **Frontline Staff Interviews**
  - A series of 20 telephone interviews conducted with frontline staff working in federal, provincial, territorial and municipal service centres. All interviews conducted by phone, average interview length was 30 minutes using client supplied sample.
  - Interviews were conducted between February 12th and February 23rd, 2007

Methodology (continued)

- **Target Audiences:**
  - **Federal/Provincial and Municipal business centres frontline staff** – BizPaL frontline contacts.
  - **Small and medium-sized business owners and operators** responsible for communicating with government on behalf of their organization and **who are most responsible for obtaining permits and licensing information from governments (municipal, provincial or federal) on behalf of their respective organization.**
  - **Business intermediaries/ Trusted Third Parties**, that is, third parties that businesses often look to for business permit and licensing information (e.g. accountants, lawyers, business planners, Chamber of Commerce representatives, etc).
  - **Interview/Group composition:**
    - 20 telephone interviews with business centre staff ;
    - 10 groups and 12 IUIs conducted with SME owners/operators; and
    - 2 groups and 2 IUIs conducted with Trusted third parties. One group and one IUI conducted with Trusted Third Parties in each of Vancouver and Quebec City.

Detailed Findings – IUIs and Focus Groups

Primary Sources of Information for Business Permits and Licences

- Participants mention a variety of sources when it comes to obtaining information on required business permits and licences. Sources include:
  - Trusted third party individuals (lawyers, accountants, bankers);
  - Google and internet searches primarily for federal and provincial government information;
  - Word of mouth (conversations with other entrepreneurs); and
  - Face to face (visits to their local business centre) or telephone enquiries for local/municipal government enquiries.
- Governments not always seen as the first stop:
  - While some participants do say they go directly to government – either in person or by telephone – for this type of information, for many, contacting governments directly can lead to long and frustrating wait times and confusing/technical information – hence, the increased reliance on other sources (trusted third parties) to obtain and decipher much of this information.

"I think I would probably go through our lawyer, and ask the questions there or ask someone at the lawyer's office as opposed to searching it out and possibly making an assumption based on what you read that may or may not be correct."

« J'appelle au numéro 1-800 du gouvernement – ça couvre deux paliers – et c'est eux qui font des recherches à notre place »

"I went to the web to see the rules for building a garage, I found a document that was 400 pages long… you have to look through 100s of pages to find what you're looking for."

Awareness of BizPaL

- Most have never heard of BizPaL. Among the few who have, there is no clear understanding of the initiative, its contributors or of BizPaL's mandate – to provide fast and easy access to business permits and licences information from all three levels of government.
- "BizPaL" tends to suggest;
  - A user friendly and uncomplicated resource.
  - A relative streamlining of the information retrieval process which in turn would likely lead to quick and easy access to business related information.
- The name is not readily associated with permits and licences (only a few participants in the groups made this association without prompting and this after the subject matter of the discussion (permits and licences) had already been introduced; and,
- It seems to create over-expectations. Participants nearly always expected that the BizPaL service would be their one-stop shop for all their dealings with governments with regard to setting up a business, including obtaining a business number, GST, etc.
- Some question the relatively simplistic and informal nature of the name.

"It's your best friend. Pal. Business pal. Friendly website."
"Well I think it would give you the information you require easily because so many times with government type websites the jargon in there is so difficult for a lay person to understand that's why I go to a lawyer, so BizPaL – layman type language."
"It's a little informal for the business sector."
"Non-professional sounding name, if we're talking about government."

Initial Reactions to the BizPaL Initiative – A Step in the Right Direction…

- Initial reactions to BizPaL are very positive.

- The idea of a 'one stop shop' for information on business permits and licences is very well received, as is the notion of governments working together to better serve businesses.

- There is an expectation among many that this type of service would and should likely, if not currently then eventually, include 'other' types of information (beyond just permits and licences) that businesses require in order to operate, i.e., labour standards, import/export information, information on taxation etc.

- There is also an expectation that the information provided is current and that any regulatory changes impacting on the type and or nature of permits required to operate a business would be reflected in BizPaL.

- In terms of expectations, it is more about managing them than anything else. Research findings suggest that as awareness and usage of BizPaL increases, users would likely look to this service as a true one-stop-shop for business permits and licences i.e., electronic filing and payment options etc.

Initial Reactions to the BizPaL Initiative – First Impressions are Lasting Impressions…

- **Based solely on the definition of BizPaL provided, and despite reservations expressed by some with regard to past interactions with various levels of government for this type of information, participants are generally willing to give the service the benefit of the doubt. That said, should BizPaL not meet participants' expectations initially (speed, ease of navigation, intuitiveness, and clarity), many are sceptical as to whether they would return to try it again.**

"Simplicity is key."

"I would give it a try …. If bitten once or twice I would not go back to it."

"If it's a government idea, how bureaucratic is it? How well is it going to be done? What corners will be cut?"

"If you have all three levels (of government) in one place, (that is) kind of a relief to have all in one place."

« Moi je le vois comme un orienteur, m'amener vers le bon guichet, et on trouvera toute l'info pertinente. »

« En bout de ligne si on passe par ce guichet, je m'attendrais qu'au bout du chemin j'ais mon formulaire en ligne »

Initial Reactions to the BizPaL initiative – It Has to be Easy to Find…

- **Participants in all groups concurred that finding a link to BizPaL on partner sites needs to be easy. All felt that a clear and easily identifiable quick link (icon or otherwise) should figure on BizPaL partners' main pages.**
  - That said, placement is key, as the 'off to the side' placement of the icon on the Ottawa site was passed over as advertising by one user.
- **If BizPaL is to be all that it can be for business clients, it must first and foremost be easy to find.**
- **Having to click extensively to gain access to the service would not be viewed in a positive light and would likely be a significant obstacle.**
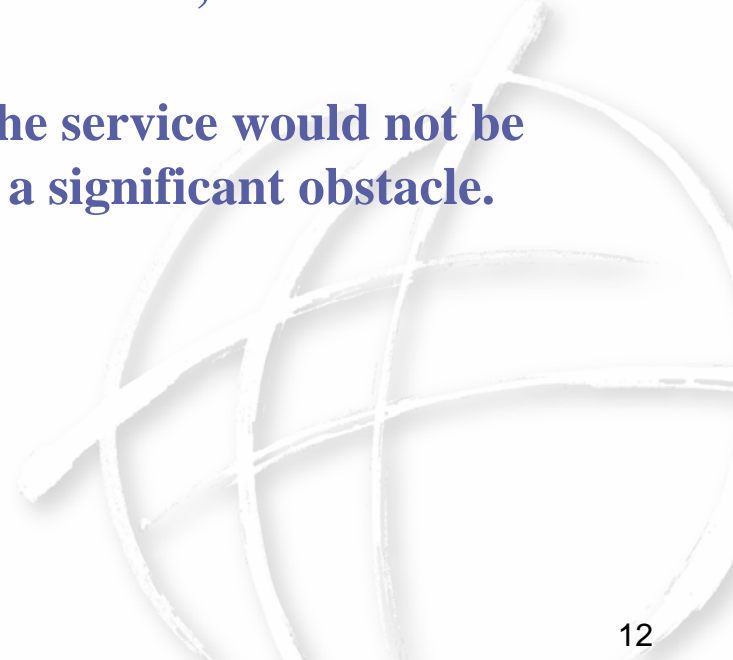
Initial Reactions to The BizPaL Initiative – Trusted Third Parties

- In many regards, Trusted Third Parties reaction to BizPaL is very similar to their counterparts in the SME and entrepreneur groups. First reactions to the idea of a unique source for business permit and licencing information from all levels of government is well received.

- Some members of this audience are, however, less easily convinced that BizPaL can accomplish all that it professes to do. In many cases, participants simply believe this approach is too simplistic and that although it would likely work for the more straightforward requests, they doubt the likelihood that a service such as this could or would provide for more complex permits and licences requirements.

- That said, on the whole, Trusted Third Parties generally recognize the potential for a product such as BizPaL to become a truly useful tool for both them and their clients. Many say they would recommend it to clients prior to meeting with them to discuss permits and licences. Others see BizPaL as a time saver allowing them to focus on other issues for their clients. Still others saw in it a profitable new business line.

« Je vais le faire moi-même je charge à mes clients 150$ pour le faire. »
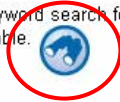
Halton Model – Welcome Page

Halton Model – Welcome Page

Overview:

- **Initial reactions to the 'Welcome page' are generally positive. It is seen as simple, easily understood and to the point.**

- **The approach corresponds with their expectations of the service.**

- **There is no confusion as to how to move forward from this page – the continue arrow button is easily found and self-explanatory.**

- **The progress bar with its 5 separate steps is effective in suggesting to participants that their search is not likely to take an inordinate amount of time.**

- **While not many participants noticed the reference to the anonymous nature of the service as noted on the welcome page, once it is pointed out to them, most underline its importance.**

Halton Model – Welcome Page

Possible areas for improvement:

- **The progress bar (Welcome, Location, Business , Questions, Results and Search) which, for some, is clearly recognized as a an indication of the process to be followed, is a source of confusion to others, who assume they can simply click forward to the questions section without having first provided information on their location and business type.**

- **Although most recognize the need for the text displayed on the 'Welcome' page, few acknowledge that they would necessarily take the time to read it – many simply saying that they would rather just click forward using the continue arrow and figure out the site as they go along.**

- **The survey button featured above the progress bar at the top of the page is confusing to some for whom the word 'survey' could suggest an additional search function.**

- **The use of three separate search links, that is, the icon above the top progress bar, the search function at the end of the progress bar, as well as the search function beneath the continue arrow are at times a source of confusion and initially seen as somewhat redundant.**

Halton Model – Location Page

Choose Your Business Location

BizPaL
Governments working together for business

🏠 Home   🌐 Search   📞 Contact Us   ✏️ Survey   🔗 Links

Welcome ▶ Location ▶ Business ▶ Questions ▶ Results ▶ Search

To determine what permits and licences you will need, we need to know where your business is or will be located. Please select from the following participating jurisdictions.

Province/Territory   Municipality
Saskatchewan ▾   Saskatoon ▾

Continue ⇨

If your location is not listed, please contact *business infosource* - the Canada-Saskatchewan Business Service Centre at 1-800-667-4374 toll free between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays or e-mail: saskatchewan@cbsc.ic.gc.ca for questions about starting a business or e-mail bizpal@gov.sk.ca to inquire about expanding BizPaL to your municipality.

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Halton Model – Location Page

Overview:

- **Reactions to the 'Location' page are generally positive. It is seen as simple, easily understood and to the point.**

- **This approach is deemed to be intuitive and corresponds with participants' expectations of the service.**

- **Some also comment positively on the fact that the site pre-selects the appropriate province and or territory – one less step for users to complete.**

- **The use of drop down boxes for provinces/territories and local government or municipality is well received and intuitive.**

- **Again, the continue arrow which appears once a specific location has been selected is easily identifiable and clearly communicates next step to users.**

Halton Model – Location Page

Possible areas for improvement:

- **Few instinctively notice the change in shading in the progress bar as the information retrieval exercise progresses – some wonder out loud if an alternative and more striking colour for the progress bar might not be in order.**

- **The use of the words 'local government' as is the case in the BC site, leads to some discussion. Participants suggest possible alternatives such as 'municipality' or 'city'.**

Halton Model – Business Type Page

Halton Model – Business Type Page

Overview:

- For most this page is simple and straight forward.

- Participants appreciate:

  - The progressive approach which confirms previously selected information i.e., "You have selected [location and province]".

  - Having options (keyword vs. available list function) in order to obtain their desired information.

  - Upon selection of a business type, the provision of a clear definition of the business referenced. This definition serves two functions:

    - To confirm the correct business type (red highlighted text)
    - To provide useful information on how this specific business is defined.
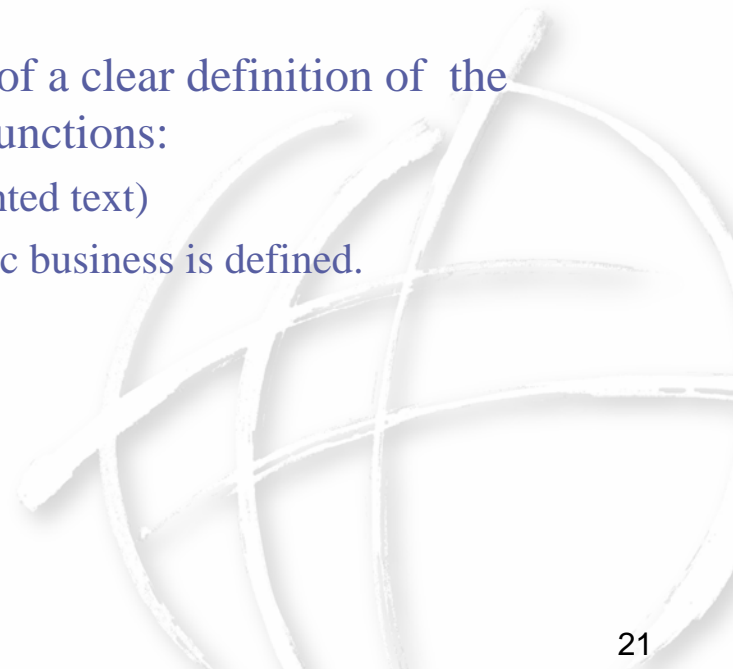
Halton Model – Business Type Page

Possible areas for improvement:

- The use of three separate search possibilities (icon above the progress bar, the progress bar and the icon next to the keyword search function) is a source of considerable confusion.
    - Participants don't readily understand the distinctions that exist between the search function appearing above the progress bar and in the progress bar and the search function appearing next to the keyword search box. The former allows participants to search for specific permits and licences, whereas the latter simply initiates the keyword search.
- There is also some confusion regarding the search options highlighted on this page primarily due to the numerical bullets suggesting separate steps in the information retrieval process rather than two separate means by which to perform an information search:

    1. Search for the business category by a keyword specific to your business.
    2. Click the button to browse for all business categories mapped for your location

- In addition, the association between the keyword box and two other icons appearing at the bottom of the page and the written instructions appearing above them is confusing to many. Participants generally suggesting that the keyword search box should appear directly after or beneath the text in item 1. In this case users would simply input their keyword and hit the return key to initiate their search. Alternatively the search button could simply be moved so that it follows directly after the keyword search box.
- As for the checkmark, there is some questioning as to the need to have this icon appear separately given that it is already included in the text appearing in item 2.

Halton Model – Business Type Page

Possible areas for improvement (cont'd):

- **Results of a 'keyword' or 'available' search are at times less than obvious. In many cases participants fail to notice the bullet with the corresponding business category which at times appears only after one has scrolled down on the page.**

- **The key word search feature received mixed reviews depending on how accurate the list of options it produced was perceived to be. Several times, participants were confused by results that seemed to have no bearing on what they had provided as key words. For example, a search of "bars" brings up RV Parks and Campgrounds and Structural Steel and Precast Concrete Contractors rather than the drinking establishments the participant anticipated. Sometimes users misspelled words and obtained no results.**

Halton Model – Business Type Page

Possible areas for improvement (cont'd):

- **Participants generally expect that the initial listing according to business category and all subsequent listings resulting from available list enquiries will be presented in some form of discernable order – preferably in alphabetical order so as to accelerate their information retrieval and minimize the need for excessive scrolling.**

- **The Regional Municipality of Halton model creates even more confusion by providing three different ways to search for a business type: key word, available (meaning mapped – neither of these terms is completely intuitive for participants), and full list (the complete list of business classification)**
  - The full list is felt to be difficult to use and redundant.

Halton Model – Questions Page

Permit and Licence Questions

BizPaL
Governments working together for business

🏠 Home   🌐 Search   📱 Contact Us   ✏️ Survey   🔗 Links

Welcome ▸ Location ▸ Business ▸ Questions ▸ Results ▸ Search

You selected **Bed and Breakfast (721191)** located in **Saskatoon, Saskatchewan**.

Please answer the following series of questions that will help determine which type of permits and licences your business requires.

---

1. Will you be making any improvements or changes to your buildings, structures or property including new construction, building moving/demolitions, road access or changes to your gas, electrical or plumbing installations? (more)

   ◯ Yes ◯ No

2. Will you be using a vehicle in connection with your business? (mo

   ◯ Yes ◯ No

3. Will you be preparing or keeping any food on site for the general p

   ◯ Yes ◯ No

BizPaL
Governments working together for business

Permit and Licence Questions

🏠 Home   🌐 Search   📱 Contact Us   ✏️ Survey   🔗 Links

Welcome ▸ Location ▸ Business ▸ Questions ▸ Results ▸ Search

You selected **Bed and Breakfast (721191)** located in **Saskatoon, Saskatchewan**.

Based on your answers there are few more follow-up questions that we need you to answer.

---

7. Will you be installing or changing any electrical wiring? (more)

   ⦿ Yes ◯ No

8. Will you be installing or changing any gas piping or equipment? (more)

   ⦿ Yes ◯ No

9. Will you be demolishing or moving a building off of your property? (more)

   ⦿ Yes ◯ No

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Halton Model – Questions Page

Overview:

- **Overall, participants react favourably to the question and answer approach, it is seen as a logical progression in the information retrieval exercise and very much in line with the step by step approach featured throughout.**

- **Additionally, participants appreciate the prominent display (at the top of the page) of information previously submitted in the location and business type screens, allowing them to confirm that they are on the right path.**

- **Although the word 'more' in parentheses (more) following questions generally goes unnoticed initially, once it is pointed out to them, participants tend to appreciate the additional information provided.**

- **In the Regional Municipality of Halton version, the radial buttons are already filled in with a negative response. Users found this approach to be a little difficult, especially when they go back to change their answers.**

- **Generally speaking participants do not take issue with the follow-up questions which appear once initial questions have been submitted. Most recognize that this step will ensure that the information provided by BizPaL will be tailored to their particular circumstances.**

Halton Model – Questions Page

Possible areas for improvement:

- There is a general sense that supplementary information provided by clicking on the word 'more' should complement the information already supplied in the initial question in such a way as to further assist users in answering the question at hand, not simply a reformulation of the same information.

- The transition between the first question screen and the follow-up question screen at times went unnoticed. Some commenting that for individuals with a click first ask questions later approach, the explanation that additional answers are required could, and more often than not would, go unnoticed.

- Although users recognize that the number of questions to be answered in this section will depend greatly on the type of business queried and where it is located, to the extent that it is possible, participants generally would prefer to presented with minimal scrolling.

- In cases where users might choose to edit previously submitted answers, the addition of a back button (similar to the continue button) would be a good idea rather than having to use the back button on their browser.

Halton Model – Results Page

Permit and Licence Results

BizPaL
Governments working together for business

Home | Search | Contact Us | Survey | Links

Welcome > Location > Business > Questions > Results > Search

The following list of **17** Permits and Licences may be required for a **Bed and Breakfast (721191)** business located in **Saskatoon, Saskatchewan** based on your responses to the following questions:

1. Will you be making any improvements or changes to your buildings, structures or property including new construction, building moving/demolitions, road access or changes to your gas, electrical or plumbing installations? ◆ Yes
2. Will you be using a vehicle in connection with your business? ◆ Yes
3. Will you be preparing or keeping any food on site for the general public? ◆ Yes
4. Will you have a Swimming Pool or Hot Tub? ◆ Yes
5. Will you be putting a temporary or permanent sign on your building or property? ◆ Yes
6. Will you be playing any live or recorded music? ◆ Yes
7. Will you be installing or changing any electrical wiring? ◆ Yes
8. Will you be installing or changing any gas piping or equipment? ◆ Yes
9. Will you be demolishing or moving a building off of your property? ◆ Yes
10. Will you be constructing an outside swimming pool or hot tub on your property? ◆ Yes
11. Will you be constructing, renovating, altering, relocating, or repairing any buildings or accessory buildings on your property? ◆ Yes
12. Will you be making any changes to the existing plumbing system on your property? ◆ Yes
13. Will you be changing the road access to your property? ◆ Yes

Note: Detailed information about an individual permit or licence can be viewed by clicking on its title. Clicking the title a second time returns the permit or licence to the list view. You may view the details of all permits

◉ View as List | ○ View All as Details | Print

1. **Building Permit (Saskatoon)**
2. **Vendor's Licence (Saskatchewan)**
3. **Public Eating Establishment Licence (Saskatchewan)**
4. **Itinerant Use Accommodation Licence (Saskatchewan)**
5. **Swimming Pool Licence (Saskatchewan)**
6. **Demolition Permit (Saskatoon)**
7. **Electrical Permit (Saskatchewan)**
8. **Gas Permit (Saskatchewan)**
9. **Plumbing Permit (Saskatoon)**
10. **Swimming Pool Permit (Saskatoon)**
11. **Obstruction of Street or Sidewalk Use of City Right-of-Way Permit (Saskatoon)**
12. **Curb and Sidewalk Crossing Permit (Saskatoon)**
13. **Sign Permit (Saskatoon)**
14. **Business Licence (Saskatoon)**
15. **Vehicle Registration (Saskatchewan)**
16. **Performing Rights Licence (Canada)**
17. **Business Name Registration (Saskatchewan)**

Note: To save this page click on the file menu and select "Save As"

BizPaL is an evolving service designed to meet your permit and licence information needs. Please complete a short survey to help us improve the BizPaL service by clicking here

A wide variety of online resources are available to Saskatchewan's business community. A list of many of these resources has been assembled including a description and link to their website. The list can be accessed by clicking here

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1. Building Permit (Saskatoon)

General Info: Type: Permit. Municipality: Saskatoon.

Description: A permit is required when a new building is constructed, an existing building is altered or an existing building is affected by a change of use.

Prerequisites: The applicant must submit at least 2 copies of the site plan and construction plans along with an estimate of costs related to the work being done.

Inspection: Required After

Comments: The owner of the building can apply for the building permit and perform the work or a designer or contractor can apply on the owner's behalf. Permit fees must be paid in full at the time the permit is issued.

Contacts: Organization: City of Saskatoon, Building Standards Branch. Person: Commercial Permit Officer . Phone: 306-975-2645 Fax: 306-975-7712. Address: 222 - 3rd Avenue North City Hall Saskatoon SK S7K 0J5. E-mail Contact Information.

More Information — Downloadable Form
Waiting period: 5 day(s) to 25 day(s). — Costs

Halton Model – Results Page

Overview:

- **The placement of the recap of answers provided at the top of the results page is problematic. Although participants generally appreciate being reminded of answers submitted in the questions screen, most suggest that this information should be located further down on the results page.**

  - Moreover, its current position, and the text introducing it, makes some participants think that these are the results, i.e. the list of permits needed.

- **Despite the fact that very few participants actually take the time to read the instructions on how to view detailed information about each individual permit and or licence, when both options 'view as list' and 'view all as detail' are demonstrated, reactions are positive.**

  - The Regional Municipality of Halton version defaults to a display of the detailed permit information and provides only a 'view as list' checkbox, with no explanation given. This is confusing to participants who expect to be provided with a list of required permits.

Halton Model – Results Page

Overview (cont'd):

- Likewise, although most acknowledge that they would simply ignore the information presented in the 'specific business category notes' or ' general business information' section – which appear beneath the permit and licences listing, once afforded an opportunity to review this section, most agree that this information would be relevant to them (particularly the various phone numbers and URLs supplied) and should probably be made to stand out more than is currently the case.

- Participants also appreciate having a print button in order to print the current view of permits and licences displayed on the page. However, there tends to be confusion particularly among those with less experience using online forms as to what exactly is likely to be printed, the current page or the actual permit/licence application they require.

- There is an expectation that once answers have been submitted and results have been obtained via the results page, that users would have the ability to return to the questions page in order to edit previously submitted answers without having to answer all questions again as is currently the case. Alternatively, participants suggest they should have the ability to do so directly on the results page (changing yes answers to no or alternatively no answers to yes).

Halton Model – Results Page

Overview (cont'd):

- Participants have positive reactions to the detailed information on specific permits or licences as displayed by using either the view all as details or simply clicking on the specific permits listed. The provision of contact information, forms and details regarding waiting periods and costs are particularly well received.

    – Some of the labels used to identify the information in the Regional Municipality of Halton version are not clear to participants. They do not understand the difference between 'application' and 'downloadable form' for instance.

- Some question why the amount of information available varies from one permit or licence to the other i.e., why is it that in some cases an email address is available whereas in other cases it is not.

- The organization of the permits is not evident to them.

- The disclaimer section is viewed by most participants as a somewhat regrettable but usual necessity. On the other hand, a few feel that it undermines the credibility and trustworthiness of the service.

- Nearly all participants indicate that they would print the results page and save a hard copy in their files. Several would like to be able to save a soft copy but it is not clear to them how to do so.

Halton Model – Results Page

Possible areas for improvement:

- There is general agreement that the results page should first and foremost highlight the listing of permits and licences rather than the current approach of providing an overview of question answers followed by the listing of individual permits and licences. This is further compounded by the first sentence beneath the progress bar which starts with "the following list of X number of permits…"

- The detailed 'specific business category notes' or ' general business information' currently appearing at the bottom of the results screen often goes unnoticed. Participants often consider the listing of individual permits and licences as the end of their search. This type of business-related resources information (business registration URL, business checklist URL, zoning contact telephone numbers, CRA website URL etc.) is seen as vital for businesses, and, as such, participants think it's great and this info should be better showcased.

- In cases where individual URLs are listed in the 'specific business category notes' or general business information' sections, they should be hyperlinked so as to facilitate fast and easy access to this equally important information.

Iframe Model – Online Business Permits and Licences - Welcome

Iframe Model – Online Business Permits and Licences - Welcome

Overview:

- **Initial reactions to the 'Welcome' page are generally positive. It is seen as simple, easy to understand and to the point. However, it is also seen as very "plain Jane" in terms of its presentation and is considered too wordy.**

- **Participants readily understood that they have two options for moving forward, the "To get started click here" button, and the search option for those who already know what permits and licences they require.**

  – Many mention that they would likely not be using BizPaL if they already knew which licences and permits they require but would instead be using a Search engine like Google and type in the name of the permit or licence. Several question the need for this search option.

- **While not many participants note the anonymous nature of the service, once it is pointed out to them, most underline its importance.**

- **The French version of the Welcome page contains an additional element – a caveat on the language in which different levels of government provide their information. Participants readily understand its purpose and are not offended by the notion.**

Iframe Model – Online Business Permits and Licences - Welcome

Possible areas for improvement:

- There is no confusion as to how to move forward from this page, but participants in the navigation exercises almost never took the time to absorb all the information contained in the text before doing so. Many participants felt that the information provided is useful, but could be presented more dynamically.

- A few participants feel that the two options for moving forward should be presented in the same way and given the same weight: two clickable boxes, for example.

- Many participants suggest that the appearance of the Welcome page could be improved.

- Participants in the Quebec City groups point out that the caveat on language in the French version of the Welcome page is twice as long as it needs to be because it repeats the description of the service provided in the first paragraph of the page. They also point out the incorrect use of French on the click box (Taper ici).

Iframe Model –
Online Business Permits and Licences –
Step 1of 3 (Locations)

Permis et licences électroniques d'entreprises - étape 1 de 3

Magicien   Aide

1 Afin de déterminer les permis et les licences dont vous aurez besoin, nous devons d'abord connaître l'emplacement de votre entreprise. Veuillez choisir l'une des administrations participantes suivantes.

Province/Territoire :   Ontario

Gouvernement Locale :   Ottawa

<< Retourner   Continuer >>

_FRENCH_If your local government is not listed, select 'local government not listed' from the drop down list above. You will be provided with a list of provincial and federal permits and licences. To obtain a list of required local permits and licences, please contact your local government office (i.e., city hall).

Recommencer

Iframe Model – Online Business Permits and Licences – Step 1of 3 (Locations)

Overview:

- Initial reactions to the location page are also generally positive. It is seen as simple and clear.

- Participants easily understand both how the page works and why it is necessary.

- Some also comment positively on the fact that the site pre-selects the appropriate province and or territory – one less step for users to complete. This is not a feature of the Yukon version.

- The use of drop down boxes for provinces/territories and local government or municipality is well received and intuitive.

- The Progress feature (Step 1 of 3) is appreciated because it communicates that the process is going to be streamlined and straightforward. But few note it until it is pointed out to them.

- Some participants feel that in some provinces, the limited number of available locations undermines the credibility of the offering.

Iframe Model –
Online Business Permits and Licences –
Step 1of 3 (Locations)

Possible areas for improvement:

- **There is a little confusion about the difference between the 'Back' button and the 'Start Over' button, several participants feel having both is an unnecessary duplication. This did not come up in the Whitehorse groups.**

- **Several participants recommend making the Progress feature more evident either graphically (more striking colours, actual progress bar) or simply by putting the progress language (Step 1 of 3) at the beginning of the page title as opposed to at the end. This did not come up in the Whitehorse groups either.**

- **There is English text on the French page.**
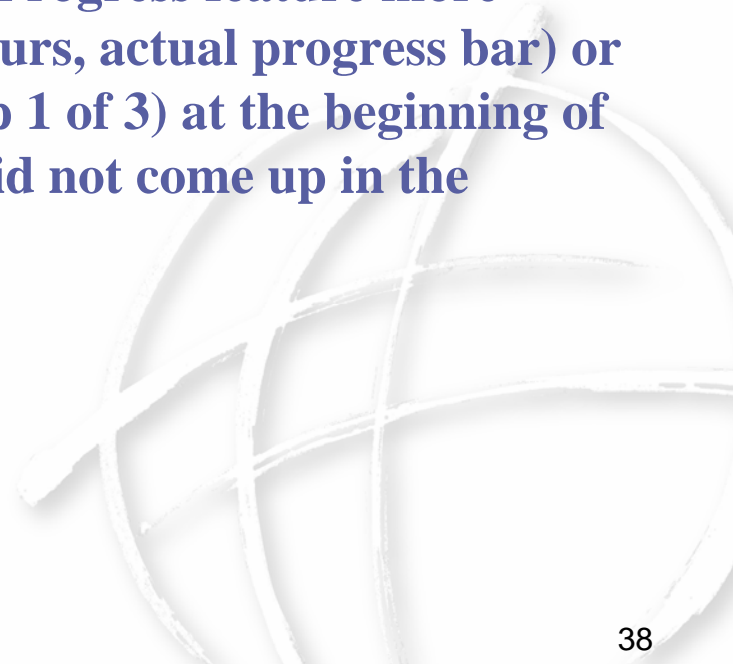
Iframe Model –
Online Business Permits and Licences - Step 2 of 3 (Location confirmation and type of business)

Online Business Permits and Licences- Step 2 of 3

Wizard   Help

1   You have selected **Ottawa, Ontario.**

2   Now you need to tell us what kind of business you are inquiring about. Please pick a business category from the following list. You may wish to search on a specific keyword if you can't quickly find the appropriate category.

PLEASE NOTE that this service may not yet be available for all business categories. If you can't find a suitable category, click here for more information.

Keyword   [   ]   **Search**   **Reset**

OR

Appliance Repair and Maintenance
Appliance, Television and Other Electronics Stores
Art Dealers
Auction House
Automotive Body, Paint and Interior Repair and Maintenance
Automotive Exhaust System Repair
Automotive Glass Replacement Shops
Automotive Parts and Accessories Stores
Bar, Pub, Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages)
Barber Shops

<< Back   **Continue >>**

Couldn't find a suitable business category?

This service is continually evolving and may not currently be able to provide you with the information that you need. If you weren't able to find a suitable business category, contact your local government offices or a government business service centre near you for more information on the permits and licences that you may require.

You may still be able to get detailed information about a specific licence or permit by searching for it by keyword. To try this **click here**.
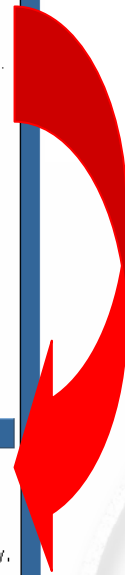
Start Over

Iframe Model –
Online Business Permits and Licences - Step 2 of 3 (Location confirmation and type of business)

Overview:

- **The word Wizard which appears at the top of this page is confusing to most participants in London and Quebec City, particularly the less savvy. Its translation (magicien) is especially confusing to the Quebec City participants.**

- **Most participants appreciate the confirmation of the location provided in the top box and feel it is a useful and necessary feature, although a very few find it irritatingly repetitive.**

- **Many but not all understand the visual depiction of progress through the steps which is provided by the stacking of boxes 1 and 2.**

- **The language used to describe Step 2 (type of business) is quite clear to most participants, although, once again, many participants in the navigation exercise charged ahead without absorbing the information. Many focus group participants indicate that this would also be their inclination.**

Iframe Model –
Online Business Permits and Licences - Step 2 of 3 (Location confirmation and type of business)

Overview (cont'd):

- **Most participants feel that it is important to have both the key word search and the scroll down list options for finding the business type.**

  - Some people describe themselves as always using key word searches first and others are scrollers. Key word searchers would probably resort to the list if their initial search did not provide the results they needed.

- **The key word search feature received mixed reviews depending on the perceived accuracy of the list of options produced. Several times, participants were confused by results that seemed to have no bearing on what they had provided as key words. For example, a search of "bars" brings up RV Parks and Campgrounds and Structural Steel and Precast Concrete Contractors rather than the drinking establishments the participant anticipated. Sometimes users misspelled words and obtained no results.**

Iframe Model –
Online Business Permits and Licences - Step 2 of 3 (Location confirmation and type of business)

Overview (cont'd):

- **This is the make or break step in terms of perceived usefulness of the tool.**

  – If participants can not easily find the business category they are seeking, they will give up. The importance of a user friendly, intuitive search engine cannot be overstated. Google has set the bar very high.

  – Naturally, participants whose business categories are not already mapped, quickly lose interest in the service.
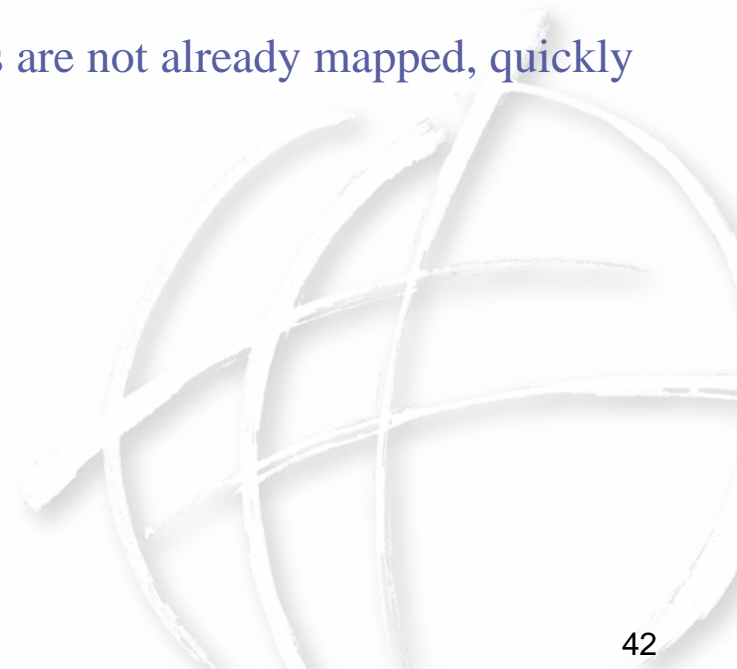
Iframe Model –
Online Business Permits and Licences - Step 2 of 3 (Location confirmation and type of business)

Possible areas for improvement:

- Several participants in the navigation exercise press the enter key instead of clicking on search. When nothing happens, they are convinced the program has glitched.

- Error messages are often displayed above the visible area of the screen, again making it seem as though nothing is happening and a glitch has occurred.

- Participants who do read the information above and below the scroll list (and again, many just seek the next click) were displeased by the apparent duplication of information. Specifically, the reference to the service not yet being available for all business categories. Similarly, participants who click on the "click here for more information" link are surprised to be linked to information contained on the same screen.

- When a key word search provides only one answer, it is not always clear to participants that they have to select it/highlight it in order to proceed.

- Several participants in London feel the scroll list would be more user friendly if it jumped to the correct alphabetical section as a user begins to type.

- The French translation of the label for the reset button (remise) is not clear to participants.

Iframe Model –
Online Business Permits and Licences - Step 2 of 3 (cont'd) (Confirmation of type of business)

Overview

- **Initial reaction to the page confirming the selection of business type is positive. Most participants appreciate this confirmation step.**

- **Some participants find the descriptions of industry sectors confusing, particularly when there are exclusions.**

- **There is no confusion about how to proceed.**

Online Business Permits and Licences- Step 2 of 3 (cont'd)

Wizard   Help

1   You have selected **Ottawa, Ontario**.

2   You have selected **Bed and Breakfast**. The description of **Bed and Breakfast** is as follows:

This Canadian industry comprises establishments primarily engaged in providing short-term lodging in facilities known as bed and breakfast homes. These establishments provide guest rooms in private homes or in small buildings converted for this use, and they often possess a unique or historic character. Bed and breakfast homes are characterized by a highly personalized service, and the inclusion, in the room rate, of a full breakfast, served by the owner or owner-supervised staff.

If your business fits the above description, click the **Continue** button below. Otherwise, click here to pick another business category.

<< Back   Continue >>

Iframe Model –
Online Business Permits and Licences - Step 3 of 3 (Questionnaire)

3 Please answer the following questions about your business. If you require help about a particular question, click the Help icon (?). Note: A new browser window will open for all help links.

? Will you be constructing, renovating or changing the use of any part of your property, including a building/structure?
- ○ Yes
- ⊙ No

? Will you be putting a temporary or permanent sign on your building or property?
- ⊙ Yes
- ○ No

? Will you be serving any alcohol?
- ○ Yes
- ⊙ No

? Will you be constructing within 800 metres of a provincial highwa...
- ○ Yes
- ⊙ No

? Are you planning to make any changes to the existing plumbing
- ○ Yes
- ⊙ No

? Are you contemplating the installation of a tent(s)?
- ○ Yes
- ⊙ No

? Are you contemplating the installation of an outdoor swimming p...pond?
- ⊙ Yes
- ○ No

Based on your answers to the questions on the last page, there are a few more follow-... questions that we need you to answer.

? Are you planning to construct a new on-site sewage/septic system or alter an existing system that has a capacity of 10,000 litres per day or less?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

? Will you be installing or using one of the following?
- ○ Permanent sign
- ○ Temporary sign
- ○ Both a temporary and a permanent sign

<< Back   Continue >>

Start Over

Iframe Model –
Online Business Permits and Licences - Step 3 of 3 (Questionnaire)

Overview:

- Most participants understand the purpose of the questionnaire and feel that nearly all the questions are quite straightforward.
  - Questions that are most troublesome and unclear to participants are those regarding the installation of a tent, the distance from a provincial highway and the playing of live or recorded music.

Possible areas for improvement:

- Clicking through to Step 3 of 3 brings participants into the middle of the page. They find the need to scroll up to the top of the page annoying. This does not happen with the Yukon version.
  - This is an issue for many of the pages. In some instances, when users clicked through there was nothing visible on the screen at all, convincing participants that there had been an error.
- Once again, there was a tendency not to read the explanatory notes, so many participants do not recognize the 'Help icon.' They think the question mark at the beginning of each question is just a graphic element or, numeration.
  - The explanations provided by clicking on the **(Help)** or **(?)** which follow the individual questions are mostly seen as providing the needed clarification.
- Some questions the decision to present the follow-up questions on a subsequent screen. There is discussion about whether there is a need to more clearly present these as a continuation of the initial list of questions, through the use of numeration for example. Many participants suggest the use pop-ups to ask needed follow–up questions immediately rather than having to select the **(Help)** or **(?).**
- Participants are confused by apparent errors in programming that result in follow-up questions being asked, even when they have responded in the negative on the previous screen (Are you planning on making changes to the existing plumbing system? No. Are you planning to construct a new on site sewage/septic…?)

Iframe Model –
Results Page – Your Answers

Printer Friendly   **Start Over**

Congratulations!

The list of permits and licences you need for the **Appliance Repair and Maintenance** business category for **Ottawa, Ontario** are shown below along with the answers you provided.

Please print this list for future reference by selecting the **Printer friendly** link above or save the list to your computer using your Internet browser's **'Save As'** functionality.

Once you've reviewed your results, please take a minute to answer a few questions that will help us improve this service. Click here to respond to our client questionnaire.

Detailed Results

Your Answers:	
Will you be constructing, renovating or changing the use of any part of your property, including a building/structure?	➡ Yes
Will you be putting a temporary or permanent sign on your building or property?	➡ Yes
Will you be constructing within 800 metres of a provincial highway?	➡ Yes
Are you planning to make any changes to the existing plumbing system?	➡ Yes
Are you contemplating the installation of a tent(s)?	➡ Yes
Will you be selling any second hand or used TVs, stereos, radios or electronic equipment?	➡ Yes
Will the building have an elevator or escalator?	➡ Yes
If the business location uses an on-site sewage or septic system, will it generate more than 10,000 litres of waste discharge per day?	➡ Yes
Does your construction activity require the demolition of a building or structure?	➡ Yes
Will you be updating or establishing new connections to the City's sewer or water supply?	➡ Yes
Will your construction or renovation activity involve or impact the City's property, such as City roads, sidewalks, road allowance or right-of-way?	➡ Yes
Will you be installing or using one of the following?	
➡ **Permanent sign**	
Will you be making any changes to your electrical system?	➡ Yes

Change My Answers

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Iframe Model –
Results Page – Your Answers

Overview:

- Overall, the results page is the least well-received of the pages in terms of its lay-out and design. This may very well be a reflection of the fact that this page contains the most information.

- Once again, participants were of the view that there is too much text and tend not to read the information presented at the top of the screen.

- While nearly all note the 'Printer Friendly' button, nearly no one registers the instructions on how to save an electronic copy of the results page.

- Almost no one noted the link to the client questionnaire designed to improve the service. That said, many participants point out that they "never fill these things in…"
  – This is not a feature of the Yukon model.

Possible areas for improvement:

- The layout of the answer confirmation screen annoyed several participants as they indicate that they find it difficult to visually align questions and answers. Several suggest a table format would be helpful.

- Participants are appalled when they become aware that choosing to revise their answer to a question means filling in the questionnaire from the beginning again.

- Participants are all of the view that the capacity should exist to make changes to their answers directly on the answer confirmation screen, or at the very least, that they could be brought back directly to an answer that they indicated they wish to change.

- Participants suggest the need for a 'Save Electronic Copy' button alongside the 'Printer Friendly' button.

Iframe Model –
Results Page – Permits

Overview:

- The display of the permits needed, with the numbered list set out above and the detailed information on each permit displayed below makes sense to most participants, although a few find it a little confusing.
    - Once again, participants skip over the explanatory text.
- Participants like having the numbered list as a sort of table of contents to the detailed information on permits and licences but are divided as to whether the detailed information should all be displayed below or should pop open when clicked on.
- They appreciate the types of information provided in the detailed section for each of the permits. The labels for each type of information are clear in English but not in French (these have since been corrected).
- The organization of the permits is not evident to them but they feel that this is a sensible way to present the information.
- Nearly all participants indicate that they would print the results page and save a hard copy in their files. Several would like to be able to save a soft copy but it is not clear to them how to do so.

Possible areas for improvement:

- Ideally, they would like to see:
    - Online application available for each type of permit, or, at least, downloadable forms.
    - Live links that open directly to the specific information they seek. Participants were very disappointed when they clicked through to a partner site and had to search for the promised information.
    - The organizing principle explained.

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Iframe Model –
Results Page – Specific Business Notes and General Business Information

Overview:

- Participants are nearly unanimous in declaring that they would be unlikely to get all the way to the bottom of the site and disinclined to read so imposing an amount of text as that found in the Specific Business Notes and General Business Information sections.

- That said, once directed to read it, they feel that it provides them with a significant amount of important information.

  - The General Business Information in particular is an area that participants had highlighted as a significant gap in the BizPaL service offering.

  - The disclaimer section is viewed by most participants as a somewhat regrettable but usual necessity. On the other hand, a few feel that it undermines the credibility and trustworthiness of the service.

Possible areas for improvement:

- Participants suggest making the General Business Information more prominent and useful by:

  - Creating a linked module, of a similar type to BizPaL, for start-ups that takes them through getting a business number, GST number, etc.

  - Or making the information more graphically prominent and dynamic and moving it up on the page.

  - Or, at the very least, providing hyperlinks to the necessary partners.

Detailed Findings – Interviews with Frontline Staff

Frontline Staff - Typical Protocol

- **In general, most enquiries about permits and licensing are made over the phone. Some offices, for example, business development offices, deal with clients on a walk in basis more frequently than on the phone.**

   "I usually ask them for the basic information that I will need to determine how to advise them appropriately."

- **In most offices the typical scenario when clients come in or call their office to enquire about permits and licences starts with a series of questions. The employee will start by asking their client what type of business they are in, or would like to get into. Based on that information, the employee will provide the basic information on the types of permits and licences that the client will require.**

- **They may also provide some advice on the types of resources available to new or established entrepreneurs as well as the contact information of the various offices that the client will need to contact. There are a variety of processes in place to facilitate this process. Some mentioned guides or starter kits for new entrepreneurs while others referred to online resources like databanks and websites (BizPaL, their own website, the city's website, etc). Overall, all felt that their protocol for dealing with clients works very well.**

Frontline Staff – Reactions to BizPaL

- Those interviewees with access to BizPaL in their area responded very favourably to BizPaL. Almost all of those who have access use it frequently, ranging from two or three times a day to on a daily basis. They describe it as a "one-stop-shop" where they can easily access up-to-date information on permits and licensing from all three levels of government. They stress that the tool is complementary to their current processes and does not replace the other tools that they use on a regular basis.

- There is widespread agreement that BizPaL is helpful.

- There is general agreement that BizPaL is user friendly and that the question and anwer approach was an efficient way to lead clients to the appropriate information. However, a few mentioned that there were too many questions. They argued that this leads to some frustration and is "annoying".

- For the most part, respondents in locations where BizPaL is currently not yet available would very much like to have access to the service. They feel that BizPaL would help them to better assist new entrepreneurs in getting accurate information about their permit and licensing requirements. They also responded positively to the notion that information from all levels of government is available in one place.

"I think that, even though BizPaL is a great tool for our clients, at the end of the day, people still need to be able to contact a human being to get full, detailed answers to their questions."

"I find it very user friendly. The client simply answers a series of questions, and then they get a sort of check list of what they need to do."

Frontline Staff - How They Guide Clients

- **As a rule, walk-in clients are frequently provided with additional assistance/instructions on how to use BizPaL. Conversely, Frontline staff who recommend BizPaL on the phone very rarely walk their clients through the process. These individuals (frontline staffers) comment that going through the various steps is unnecessary because the BizPaL is self-explanatory.**

"When people walk in, I sometimes walk them through BizPaL…if I have the time. But I only do it because I like showing off the program, not because I don't think that they will figure it out on their own."
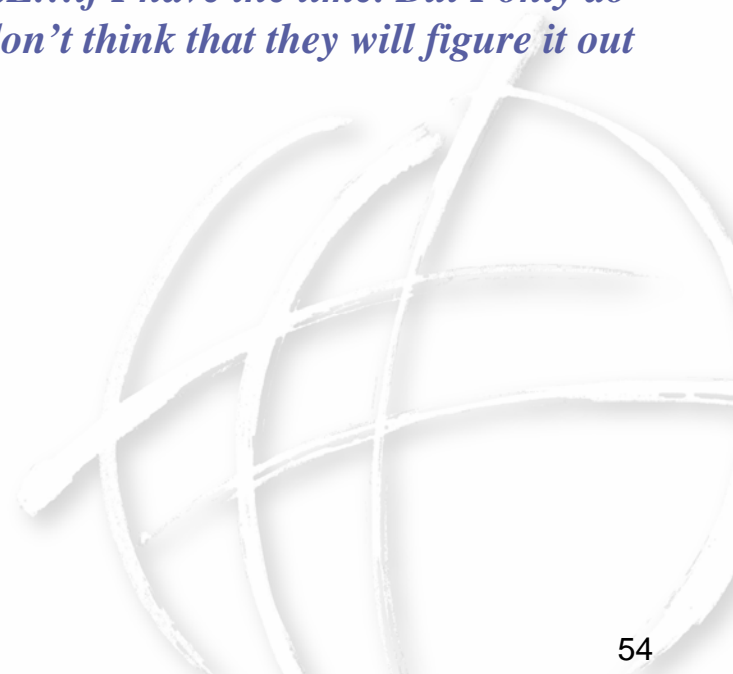
Frontline Staff - Follow Up

- As a rule, staff do not make it a practice to conduct regular follow up calls to see if the client found the information they needed through BizPaL. They simply refer the client to the URL and tell them to call back if they have any questions.

- They very rarely receive questions about BizPaL, leading them to believe that the clients are satisfied with the site.

- All interviewees stated that they had all of the necessary information to help clients use BizPaL, and that their clients expect that from them.

"We never get calls about how to use BizPaL. I would be surprised if we did – it is so easy to use."

Frontline Staff - Client Feedback

- Client feedback is mostly positive with a few comments about the insufficient number of mapped business sectors available.

- Some staff members mention some feedback on the results page, which at times can be somewhat confusing to some users. A few frontline staff mentioned that the PST vendor certificate has been set as a default when it is not always pertinent.

- Most clients describe the service as efficient, user friendly, one-stop-shopping, useful and time saving.

"The word I would use to describe the feedback is 'ecstatic'. Ecstatic that everything is in one place. Several people comment that they have dealt with other cities and they had to go through several steps to get what they needed…here everything is in one place and they are just amazed."

Frontline Staff - Views on Adding More Content

- **Staff members have mixed views on whether or not there should be other types of business information on the site. Some suggested that BizPaL should include information on business plans, G.S.T. numbers, zoning, mapping, and other business advice.**

"It would be great if they could get access to other types of information, like zoning and mapping information."

- **Others felt that by adding other types of information, the site would become overwhelming and encumbered, leading to frustration among end users.**

"Too much information would just be overwhelming and redundant. BizPaL is great the way it is. If they want information on other types of business requirements and regulations, it is already out there, putting it on BizPaL would just be confusing."

Frontline Staff - Recommendations

- **Frontline Staff make the following recommendations:**
  - Improve the search engine by making it easier to use.
  - Include more mapped business sectors.
  - Update information on a continual basis as changes are made to the permits and licences. A few suggested yearly or monthly updates.
  - Expand BizPaL to all municipalities.
  - Market it more aggressively.

"Adding more key words to the key word menu… I was trying to search hair salon and nothing came up…they use different words…if it were more comprehensive, it would be more efficient."

"I think that it should be updated at least once or twice a year, like we do with our local database."

"We need a more complete list of business sectors, so that everyone can use the site

"The one thing that I would do is develop a local marketing scheme that would highlight that BizPaL is a one-stop-shop for someone who wants to start a business…most people just aren't aware that the information is out there."

Conclusions

- **By its very nature qualitative research invites participants to be somewhat more critical than they would likely be in their day-to-day lives. That said, despite numerous suggestions for improvements moving forward, there is quasi-unanimous agreement among focus group and IUI participants that BizPaL is a good idea and one that has the potential to save them time and make their lives easier.**

- **BizPaL is seen as most useful to people starting up a business.**

- **The idea of providing timely access to permits and licensing information resulting from a coordinated effort from all three levels of government is definitely seen as a step in the right direction.**

- **Focus groups and Interactive User Interview findings underscore the absolute necessity for BizPaL to be simple, uncluttered and user-friendly and this from the very moment it is accessed. Indeed in this case, first impressions are likely to be lasting ones.**
  - Many participants mention the importance of a contact person in case they run into difficulties.

Conclusions

- **Less is more - text heavy screens that require excessive scrolling will simply go unread. BizPaL's target audiences are pressed for time and often impatient. They expect that information available via this service will be a few clicks away. Moreover, these individuals tend to be task oriented -- "time is money," so quick and exact answers are key; they would likely come to BizPaL with an objective in mind and quickly lose interest if excessive reading, scrolling/searching is required.**

- **There is an expectation that if BizPaL is offered as a service in a given location, it should provide users with a full list of business types for that location. Nothing will turn off a user more quickly than not seeing their own business type reflected.**

- **Interestingly, in many cases, findings from frontline staff interviews are very much in line with those obtained during both focus groups and Interactive User Interviews. Staff are delighted with the notion but see the need for a few key improvements, notably the addition of more business types and improvements to the search function.**

Appendices

- **Recruitment Screeners**
- **Focus Group Guides**
- **Interactive User Interview Guides**
- **Front Line Staff Interview Guides**

BizPaL Qualitative Research 2007

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