EZGOV EUROPE INTRODUCES THE VIRTUAL GOVERNMENT ASSISTANT

Submitted by: Ascendant Communications

Wednesday, 24 June 2009

EZGOV EUROPE INTRODUCES THE VIRTUAL GOVERNMENT ASSISTANT

London, 24 June 2009: EzGov Europe (www.ezgoveurope.com), the UK's market leader in online solutions for the Public Sector, has announced the launch of a proven, cost effective Virtual Government Assistant (VGA) for Local Authorities of all sizes.

The VGA takes the form of a virtual customer services officer (available on the Local Authority website) capable of fielding plain English text based questions from citizens and helping them find the information they want. The solution is powered by a database of questions and interlinked keywords and is capable of understanding the context of natural language queries posed by citizens, even when there are inaccuracies of spelling and grammar. In addition, it provides guidance and assistance for people who have limited experience of registering or applying for services online.

Providing a real-world example, Steve Smith, Sales & Marketing Director of EzGov Europe explained: "If a citizen asks the VGA when their recycling is due to be collected, the VGA will ask for the individual's post code and then provide the correct answer. It would also provide a link to further information about the recycling service provided by the Local Authority."

The online channel is the most cost effective way for Local Authorities to interact with citizens. In fact, Local Authority research undertaken on behalf of the Cabinet Office shows that online transactions can cost as little as 20 pence, compared with £2.80-£5.00 for telephone transactions and from £10.00-£20.00 for face-to-face transactions.

Smith continued: "Local Authority websites can be large and unwieldy which means that citizens often give up and pick up the phone or visit a drop-in centre instead. The VGA can transform these websites into friendly and easy to use resources that enable citizens to help themselves. This self-service approach is of considerable benefit to Local Authorities in terms of improving customer satisfaction whilst simultaneously reducing costs. Furthermore, it directly assists Local Authorities to meet the challenges of the UK Government's NI14 initiative (to reduce avoidable contact) by making it easy for the citizen to find answers the first time using the online channel.

"The launch of the VGA solution is fully in alignment with our strategy of enabling anyone to access government services from anywhere. In fact we're so confident of its ability to deliver cost savings that we offer a straightforward guarantee. If a Local Authority doesn't experience the necessary reduction in calls per month into the call centre to justify the VGA's monthly cost, then we won't charge for it – it's that simple," he concluded.

EzGov Europe has already signed its first three customers for the VGA solution, including Tandridge District Council in Surrey (www.tandridge.gov.uk), which has now gone live.

About EzGov Europe

EzGov Europe is a pioneer in the specialist field of enabling citizens to access government services online. Founded nearly a decade ago, the company has delivered some of the most successful and widely used online government services in the UK including Self Assessment Online for HMRC, Housing Benefit Online for City of Edinburgh Council, Money Claim Online for HM Courts Service and Carer's Allowance for DWP. Using the 140 online public sector applications developed by EzGov Europe to date, citizens have made over 25 million submissions to government. With offices in London and Birmingham, EzGov Europe continues to lead the way in the delivery of new and increasingly innovative e-services for the public sector.

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