

xserve

DIGITAL USER EXPERIENCE (UX)

INVESTMENT PROPOSAL

September 2024

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Executive Summary

Overview

Need:

Customers told us that they wanted to see improvements to the digital user experience, delivering something that was easier to use, more consistent, more insightful and more targeted to their individual needs.

Approach:

We have created this investment proposal which will deliver a unified xoserve.com experience by introducing a new digital interface and customer-specific dashboard

Benefits:

Customer users will experience personalised access to organisational / role-specific information. Accessing central systems will be less time consuming which could save c£0.4m per annum in customer resource. Using the data and analytics that the new interface will allow us to more easily store, process and keep up to date, Xoserve will be able to produce more targeted communications and manage outsourced services more effectively.

Background

As CDSP, we constantly engage with a wide variety of customers, each with distinct and often unique requirements, that change over time.

As a Central Body Organisation responsible for critical gas industry central systems and platforms, the quality of the information we share, and the way it is communicated, is of great importance. Just as our customers and stakeholders expect and rely on the robustness of the systems we maintain in order to operate successfully in the gas market, so too do they rely on having access to reliable, secure, clear, concise and targeted information that is relevant to their individual business needs.

Opportunity

In most cases, customers engage with us and consume the data and information we are responsible for digitally. They do so via our website and via separate portals and platforms such as CMS, the UK Link portal and DDP (to access customer-specific data, 'tickets' and insights).

We undertook an extensive customer engagement campaign in Q4 of 2023/24, during which we proactively sought a wide array of customer feedback on the current experience of interacting with Xoserve digitally. Via this process, we have clearly identified ways in which the customer 'UX' (and Xoserve's service management capabilities) can be enhanced by consolidating relevant, customer-specific information, data and news into a singular, easy to use digital dashboard.

Scope

- Build a new digital interface into xoserve.com that consolidates access to all CDSP digital services in one dashboard, including the UK Link Portal, Contact Management Service (CMS), Data Discovery Platform (DDP), SwitchStream and Cloud Information Exchange (CIX)
- Integrate and enhance IT support information ('tickets'), into the singular dashboard, alongside platform access, personalised news and event content from xoserve.com
- Collate, store and analyse data, information and metrics that enhances Xoserve's capability to manage digital service provision and produce more targeted, insightful customer communications

Market test and cost estimate

In order to estimate the costs associated with this project, we have undergone market testing, approaching specialist companies in the digital field. Each of the companies approached advocate a particular digital platform and an approach to delivery. The high-level estimated costs provided by each potential service provider are broadly comparable in range. Should this investment be approved by the Xoserve Board as part of the BP25 process, we will move into a robust and detailed procurement phase, selecting a 3rd party service provider to deliver elements of scope of this project.

We seek £0.9m during 2025-26 to fund a mixture of internal (project management and delivery) and 3rd party design and implementation costs, with the project expected to be completed before the start of the 2026-27 financial year. Each option also introduces an ongoing support cost (£0.25) which has been included in S&O from 2026-27.

Given that the total cost includes elements of scope that will be subject to a robust procurement exercise, we have not provided a detailed breakdown of the costs in this (publicly available) document. This approach is taken so as to mitigate against negatively impacting the probity of the coming procurement activity. We will share more cost detail in a confidential briefing following the publication of BP25 Draft 1.

Benefits

A [promotional video](#) is available to watch along with some customer reactions to a prototype product along another video with some [customer reaction](#).

We estimate a potential Return on Investment (RoI) in the region of £0.4m per year resulting from saved customer time that is currently expended on accessing information. Also, though not financially quantifiable at this time, the investment will also enhance Xoserve's capability to more efficiently and effectively manage outsourced service provision, and produce more targeted communications (right person, right information, right time).

Detailed analysis

Customer Engagement

Xoserve has conducted an extensive customer engagement campaign to understand and bring forward proposals to address key pain points with our digital service experience. Xoserve spoke to 11 organisations from across all 6 DSC customer segments between November 2023 and January 2024, with 21 individuals commenting and providing insights.

Engagement schedule

Customer	Segment	Attendees	Date
E.on / EonNext	Large Shipper	Kirsty Dudley, Andy Eisenburg	01/11/2023
Cadent	Distribution Network	Ed Allard, Andy Clasper	14/11/2023, 21/11/2023
So Energy	Small and Medium Shipper	Gabby Deere, Joe Del Placido	29/11/2023
BUUK	Independent Gas Transporter	Alex Travell, John Cooper, Kundai Matiringe, Charlotte Gilbert	30/11/2023
Wales & West	Distribution Network	Tom Stuart, Marina Papathoma	04/12/2023
Northern Gas	Distribution Network	Helen Chandler	05/12/2023
Indigo	Independent Gas Transporter	Cher Harris, Ashley Foster	08/12/2023
SGN	Distribution Network	Sally Hardman, Dave Mitchell	08/12/2023
National Gas	Transmission	Richard Loukes, Bill Goode	12/12/2023
Sefe	I&C Shipper	Steve Mulinganie	15/12/2023
Total	I&C Shipper	Swetta Coopamah	25/01/2024

We invited some customers to demo a prototype version of the portal / dashboard. Reactions to this demo can be viewed here.

3 Key Customer Sentiments

There were 3 key sentiment themes, with customers expressing the following:

1. We would like to see a step-change in UX, with information becoming more easily found and / or understandable
2. We would like Xoserve to understand and address the disconnect between service experience and operational performance, and ensure that 'value-add' should have equal prominence with cost reduction in Xoserve's thinking regarding digital UX
3. We would like Xoserve to better understand our bespoke requirements for information and tailor communications based on this insight

Our response to the feedback

Broadly, our response to this feedback is to enhance our capability across 3 areas:

- Intelligence – better understand the Right People, the Right Information and the Right Time.
- Digital Experience – delivering a digital experience that connects the user to all aspects of their CDSP services, instilling confidence as we deliver a simplified digital estate, that is intuitive, comprehensive and trusted.
- Communications – nurture trust and confidence by delivering communications that are consistently targeted, informative and valued.

Scope

1. New Digital Portal

Design and build a personalised UX with customers having the ability to choose what information and news is of interest and support the seamless switching to/between all CDSP systems and services on the website. This will include:

- A mechanism for customers to log and maintain their user preferences, which would be a new data source to feed into Xoserve's customer intelligence.
- The application of metadata and optimised curation of the CDSP digital content to be optimised through subscriptions and recommended content.

2. Support Experience

Introduce IT ticket information into the solution, thereby providing one location for all ticket information / interaction and an improved support experience, providing the transparency and ease to monitor customer service desk interactions.

3. Data Driven Insights

Collation, storage and analysis of data, information and metrics that enhances Xoserve's capability to manage digital service provision and produce more targeted, insightful customer communications

Why is this investment needed and why now?

Customers want to see a step change in Xoserve's delivery of their customer experience. However, the CDSP currently lacks several key capabilities to make improvements to that extent. This is evidenced by the plateauing measures of trust in the ICS survey, where improvement rates are slowing at a time when some customers want to see bigger enhancements.

Xoserve has an opportunity to leverage customer intelligence through a well-designed and cohesive digital estate, which will further improve our understanding our customers and lead to enhanced communication practices.

Customers, as individuals, experience the CDSP services broadly in two ways:

1. Via communications (outbound contact)
2. By logging in / accessing information and services via the digital service estate (inbound contact to the CDSP delivery)

Inbound digital routes are fragmented in terms of access points and inconsistent in terms of UX design, access controls and content. This creates a more complex user experience (UX) for customers and adds time to their efforts to complete tasks using the CDSP delivery (calculations provided in the full proposal section).

Alignment with Strategic Principles

Whilst this proposal aligns with all of Xoserve's strategic principles as set out in the [Statement of Planning Principles](#), the recommended capability enhancements primarily supports:

- From Transparency to Trust
- From Assurance to Confidence

Very high impact – how customers experience Xoserve's services is integral to building Trust & Confidence, and inconsistency undermines both. This proposal is about developing a digital experience that aligns to and compliments our CDSP operational performance.

- From System Custodian to Transition Facilitator

High impact as a tangible demonstration of capabilities beyond anything that other central service organisations are currently able to deliver. Xoserve's ambition is to be recognised as the leading standard of exceptional service

Outputs / Outcomes

A new digital interface that:

- Consolidates all¹ CDSP digital services in one place
- This would replace the existing Xoserve Services Portal (XSP) and would include:
 - UK Link portal
 - Contact Management Service (CMS)
 - Data Discovery Platform (DDP)
 - SwitchStream
 - Cloud Information Exchange (CIX)
- The solution will be designed to be scalable and modular, so Xoserve can add or remove services easily when required and reduce service transition costs at those times.
- Redesign and standardization of the access controls for the CDSP services, allowing one common process to allow organisations to manage their staffs access to workflow platforms and data visualization tools.
- Transparency over Service Desk tickets, including status, notes and other updates.
- Preference settings, allowing representatives to subscribe to key topics, industry change programmes and information broadcasts.
- Subscribed topics would be presented in an easy to view feed.
- Communications transparency (year 2 or 3)

When will the outputs / outcomes be realised?

The main outcome will be to deliver the new Xoserve Portal by March 2026 at the latest. A procurement phase following BP25 approval will be conducted, but we intend to aim for the work to begin as close as possible to April 2025.

Benefits

This initiative is designed to ensure benefits are realised across all funding parties.

Customers will have control of their own contact data, preferences and subscriptions. They will benefit from a consolidated digital estate, where it is easier to complete tasks and switch between CDSP services. They will have transparency over their tickets and subscribed topics (e.g. Change XRN webpages).

This investment is focused on providing consistency of an excellent service experience, which is a key driver for trust and confidence in CDSP delivery. Once implemented, we would expect higher KVI and ICS scores, as well as less disparity between the verbatim comments received. This would be a measure of success, particularly where the solution is explicitly highlighted as improving customer's experience or confidence in the CDSP delivery.

Within Xoserve, the MI and user data will be integrated with our own customer intelligence, giving us greater understanding of customers, and richer insight to maintain relationships. That data will also be the foundation for future communications improvements, as we move from a static, broadcast communication approach to a data-driven, targeted approach, that customers will value more.

Customer user benefits

- A consistent, high quality digital experience
- Reduced time spent for customers completing tasks (see potential Return on Investmet section below)
- Control of user preferences and contact information, as we connect all aspects of your services into one, cohesive home.
- A level of transparency across communications, subscriptions and service desk tickets, all in one place

- Data-driven self-serve opportunities, where recommendations and information are directed to you, based on your own stipulated preferences.
 - Xoserve sees this as particularly beneficial to the industry change space, keeping customers informed on key industry changes impacting their businesses.

Xoserve user benefits

- Complete ownership of digital content management
- A new layer of standardised user information will be available to continually update our customer intelligence.
- Enhanced understanding of the needs and priorities for different constituencies, organisations and individual representatives.
- Using that intelligence, our Service Managers will be able to recognize the specific users of their service areas, understand their audience better and create opportunities to engage more proactively, in a data-driven manner.
- Once delivered, Xoserve will utilise this enhanced intelligence to power enhanced communications automation and targeted campaigns to make sure industry representatives receive the information they state is of interest or relevance to them.
- Our service providers will have access to the relevant central CDSP information to support their own delivery and allow a consistent approach and visibility of customer intelligence to all delivery teams.
- As a result of all this, Xoserve will be less reliant on emails, leveraging the portal to push notifications out to the right people, at the right time.

Xoserve wants to support simplifying the gas industry. This has been a long-term ambition, and lasting challenge for our sector. Xoserve believes that developing this service will simplify the services and

information customer organisations receive, making it easier for industry participants to complete their operational tasks and consume important industry information, relevant to their business. In doing this, we will enhance customer confidence in Xoserve as a trusted industry partner.

Options summary

We have considered 3 options:

1. **Development of the incumbent digital solution**
2. **Design and build of bespoke new digital solution**
3. **Do nothing**

Options 1 and 2 broadly deliver the same customer benefits (including the potential RoI). Option 1 would involve the development of the incumbent digital solution, whereas Option 2 would see a specialist digital solution provider be selected following a robust procurement exercise to build a bespoke new solution. Market testing indicates that competing a new bespoke solution will drive VfM, hence we are recommending this option is taken forward. with Option 3 is a counterfactual 'do nothing' which would mean no changes to the current digital experience – we do not recommend this course of action.

Option	Option benefits	Cost	Status
1. Development of incumbent digital solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivers scope and customer benefits 	Commercially sensitive	Not recommended
2. Bespoke new digital solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivers all benefits Competitive procurement of specialist digital 3rd party partner 	Commercially sensitive	Recommended
3. Do nothing	No funding required in BP25	£0	Not recommended

Potential Return on Investment

A high-level model of what the potential RoI is for Xoserve's customers, is demonstrated in the table below:

Activity	Estimated Time Saving per activity (Minutes)	Volume Activity per day* (across industry)	Total Time Saving (Minutes)	Total Time Saving (Hours)	Average Weekly Wage (ONS average)	Average Hourly Wage	Predicted Industry Cost Saving per day	Predicted Industry Cost Saving per year**
Switching between systems	2	837	1673.47	27.89	£651	£16	£454	£113,518
Support requests	3	116	346.94	5.78	£651	£16	£94	£23,599
Queries	3	68	204.08	3.40	£651	£16	£55	£13,834
Finding information	2	442	884.35	14.74	£651	£16	£240	£59,946
Services Portal Single Point of Access	3	837	2510.20	41.84	£651	£16	£681	£170,277
Total							£1,524.70	£381,174.06

Budget

We propose to invest £0.9m in 2025-26, and to apply the 'common funding' default split between parties to reflect the expected shared benefits:

Shipper	Nat Gas	DN	IGT
51.40%	6.00%	41.30%	1.30%

The means for calculating this funding split is set in the [Budget and Charging Methodology](#) (section 7.2, p,20).

Cost Drivers

Given the requirement to compete elements of this work, the cost drivers are commercially sensitive and should they be shared publicly, might impact on the integrity of a forthcoming procurement exercise. The cost drivers have been shared with the 3rd party assuring this IP against the Business Plan Information Rules (BPIRs) that were implemented via UNC modification 0841 and will be provided confidentially at a dedicated briefing.

* This is based on existing reporting from website and is expected to be lower than actual volumes as does not encompass direct logins (i.e. independent portals saved as browser favourites). With the total cost of the programme estimated as £900,000 the expected time for industry to have achieved return on investment is ~2.4 years from end of the programme (Beginning Q3 2025 for RoI).

** Based on 250 working days per year

Value for Money (VfM)

VfM is a prominent factor in our approach to this investment. As with other aspects of BP25, we have utilised and will continue to apply the 5E framework when presented with decisions points as the project progresses, such as 3rd party vendor selection. We will ensure each 'E' is considered with the appropriate focus.

- **Economy** – as we assess specialist vendor tenders, the cost of each digital solution will be a key criteria
- **Efficiency** – we will adopt and promote an agile approach to the development, design and build of the digital solution
- **Effectiveness** – once scope has been delivered, the outputs will enable Xoserve to deliver a more effective digital service, and deliver better, more insightful communications. We expect to see this increased effectiveness manifest in the related DSC KPMs and PIs

- **Equitability** – we have recommended a cost split that we believe is representative of the benefits we have identified
- **Evolve** – the investment helps us to move from: Transparency to Trust, Assurance to Confidence and System Custodian to Transition Facilitator

Market testing indicates that there will be a range of costs which relate to which digital platforms and deliver approach that the vendors we have approached recommend. We are confident that a robust procurement process will lead to a VfM solution being adopted.



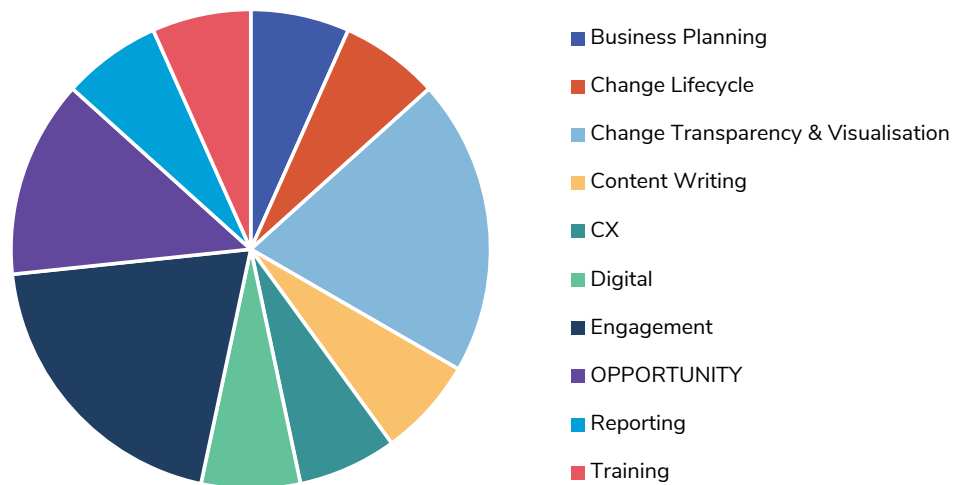
Appendix 1 Further detail regarding the customer engagement campaign

Campaign and analysis

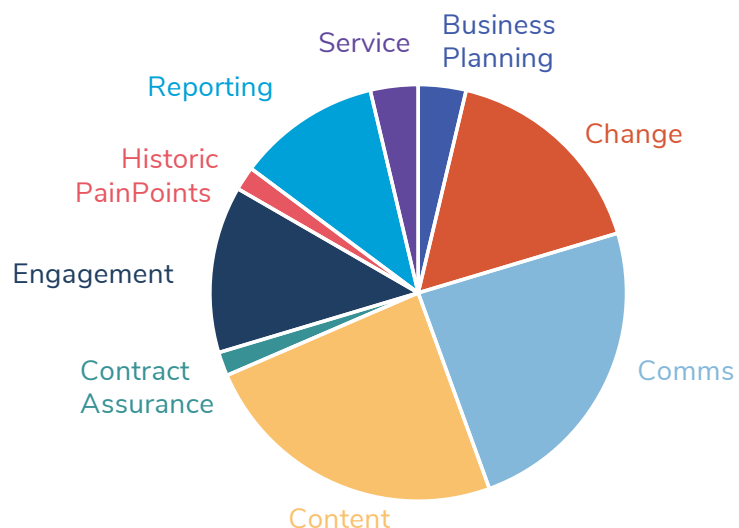
Speaking to the customers listed in the Executive Summary, there were 43 verbatim insights captured through these discussions, supporting the areas to improve, and increase the value-add of Xoserve's services. Each insight was aligned to up to 2 topical themes, giving a total of 69 points to analyse. These were split into Recognition / Opportunities and Improvement Areas.

Recognition / Opportunities – There were 15 verbatim recognising Xoserve's service value:

The biggest areas of recognition were the ongoing improvements to Change transparency and digital visualisation, as well as the direct engagement from Xoserve.



Improvement areas – 54 verbatim themes highlighting the limitations of Xoserve's service value:



CX improvement themes

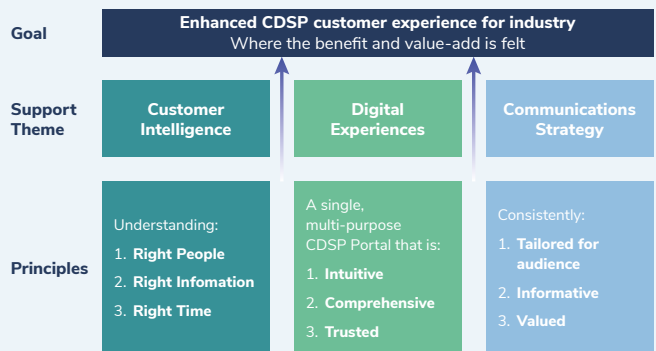
With the analysis described above, Xoserve had evidence that the biggest areas for focus need to be around Communications, Content, Change and Engagement. We can also recognise that the experience of “Change” is intrinsically connected to the other three as mechanisms for that delivery experience. It was noted that Xoserve has delivered functional and design improvements over the years, that have demonstrably driven improved customer satisfaction and added value to service experiences. However, many of those improvements have been progressed as siloed requirements or initiatives, and therefore benefits are primarily felt by users of just that specific service. The opportunity to align experiences and leverage the intelligence gained from that service usage has not yet been realised or optimised.

Customers with a **basic relationship** with the CDSP services, i.e. use 1-2 digital services, receive limited communications, and have limited use of the website receive a very consistent, valued experience. This is reflected in both the ICS scores and verbatim.

However, any representatives that develop a more **complex relationship** with the CDSP, i.e. more logins (3+), more services, different communications, etc, see more inconsistency introduced and become increasingly impacted by the identified pain points. As a result, inconsistency erodes their **Trust and Confidence** in the CDSP. This is the view represented in our engagement findings.

With this additional context and insight, we tested our conclusions with customers and recognised that these service experiences should be standardised to a high quality UX design and consolidated into one place. So, whether customers have a complex or a basic level of service, they will receive consistency and value from the CDSP. Furthermore, we should leverage the intelligence from those experiences, and use it to understand customers better and ultimately power our communications capabilities.

With the support themes operating in tandem and feeding into each other, the CDSP service estate becomes more consistent, more tailored and adds more value:



The resulting experience received by customers is greater than the sum of its parts, driving transparency, confidence and trust in the CDSP.

As a final validation, revisiting the verbatim left in the 2024 ICS survey, 71% of all improvement comments align to these CX improvement themes, and a further 13% expressed a lack of Trust and Confidence. Meanwhile, 47% of recognition comments were around the features that CX improvements will expand and drive consistency in (communications, digital & training).

Appendix 2 Milestones

For either options 1 or 2, the timescales and milestones are not expected to be materially different, only who delivers them. The following list of milestones are architecturally significant, required to support design to delivery of solution. Each milestone should be completed at the initiation of the next phase or by the end of each phase. A project plan is expected to provide more detail on dates and order of completion.

Pipeline

- Business Requirements Drafted

Scoping

- Business Process(es) Drafted
- Service Design Drafted
- Functional Specification Drafted

Discovery

- Business Requirements Completed
- Business Process(es) Completed
- Service Design Completed
- High Level Design Drafted
- Low Level Design Drafted
- Interface Catalogue Updated (if necessary)
- Functional Specification Completed
- Test Approach/Plan Drafted
- Data Security Assessment Approach/Plan Drafted

Build

- High Level Design Completed
- Test Approach Completed
- Data Security Assessment Approach/Plan Completed

Test

- Business Requirements Completed
- Business Process(es) Documented
- Service Design Completed
- Functional Specification Drafted
- Interface Catalogue Updated (if necessary)
- Low Level Design Completed
- Test Plan Completed

Deploy

- Implementation Plan Documented (including any Data Migration activities)

Adapt

- Service Communications / Training / User Guides

There are numerous reasons for amendments, updates and additional information between phases so a most drafted documents will have varying degrees of change during their lifecycle as progress ensues, until they hit their end dates.



BPIR Assurance

The independent [BPIR Assurance report](#) can be downloaded from the BP25 hub.



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