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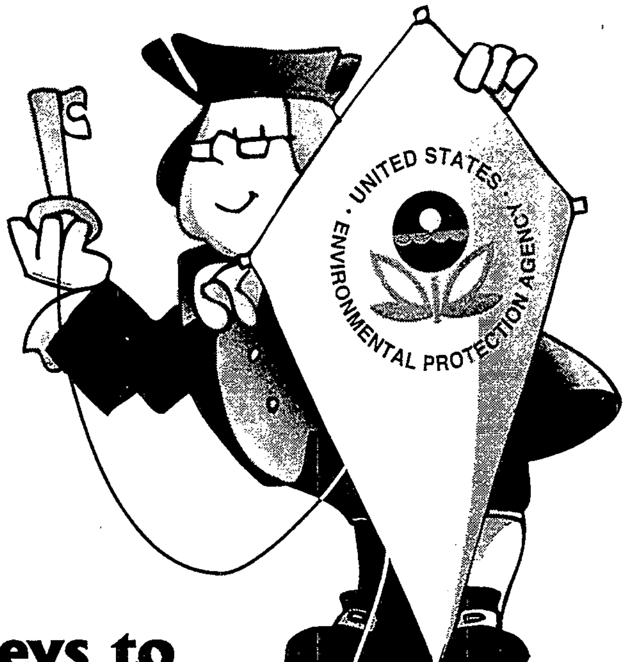
Proceedings of the Second National Customer Service Conference



Keys to
Customer Satisfaction
November 30 - December 1, 1999
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Proceedings of EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference

November 30 - December 1, 1999

Hosted by EPA Region 3

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Keys to Customer Satisfaction

TEAM EFFORT

The Region 3 on-site team who performed the magic of conference hosting and making problems disappear with a smile set the tone and the gave all who attended a great model of service excellence. The Region's Customer Service Council members kept things humming all through the process of developing the Environmental Protection Agency's Second National Customer Service Conference until the wrap-up of training sessions following the event.

Thanks to the speakers from other federal agencies, states and the private sector for sharing special insights and stories. Appreciation to the EPA Moderators from across the Agency who worked with the Customer Service program staff to ensure that speakers were comfortable and had everything they needed to be their best. Thanks to the recorders whose draft notes from all sessions made such a major contribution to this Proceedings document.

It takes many people to create a successful conference. Each person who came to freely share and learn made a contribution.

Thanks to everyone who helped make the days in Philadelphia such a great experience.

Patricia Bonner (Proceedings Editor)
Customer Service Director

PREFACE

This publication documents the Environmental Protection Agency's Second National Customer Service Conference which was held in Philadelphia - November 30 - December 1, 1999. The Conference provided participants the opportunity to learn which customer service practices are working well for EPA and other federal, state and private organizations.

The Conference focused on two area: improving agency performance by listening to customers, how organizations are successfully becoming more customer-driven because of leaders at all levels.

Several national experts addressed the conference. They included:

Charles Jeffress, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety & Health

Doug Krug, author of "Enlightened Leadership"

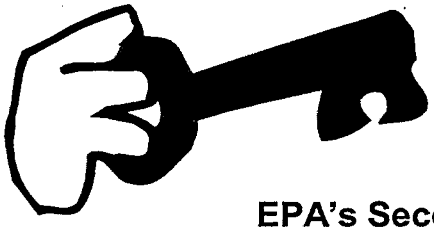
John Stanton and Richard George, authors of "Delight me - the 10 Commandments of Customer Service"

Anne Laurent, of Government Executive magazine

Frank Davis, Director, Office of Operations and Coordination, Department of Housing & Urban Development

The event enabled people from across the country who are working to accomplish the same customer service goals in many different ways, to share their successes and discuss solution to common problems. Over 300 people from federal, state and local governments, and the private sector attended speeches, panel discussion and breakout discussions to learn about best practices from organizations who are leaders in survey work, managing call centers, changing the way they do business to better serve customers, electronic government, and more. Six breakout sessions were held twice each day. Notes for the repeated sessions were combined for this proceedings document.

These proceedings contain summaries as well as full texts of speeches and presentation materials that speakers made available. Biographies of speakers, the marketing pieces outlining the twelve breakout discussion sessions and the 10 point memorandum summarizing the conference are included. Because all these items (individual files) can be accessed on the Internet at [http://www.epa.gov/customerservice/conference.htm] a note appears at the top of each file identifying it as part of the 1999 Customer Service Conference.



Proceedings
of
EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference

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Speech presented at EPA's 1999 National Customer Service Conference, November 30 - December 1

DAY 1 - OPENING SESSION
WELCOME

Thomas C. Voltaggio
EPA Acting Regional Administrator, Region 3

Good morning, fellow customers and suppliers. And thank you, Derry, for the warm introduction and for your hard work in planning EPA's second national customer service conference. I know that meetings such as this don't just happen--that months of creative and careful preparation by you and your committee allow us to spend these two days learning--and sharing practical ideas about what works in building a better, more customer-responsive agency.

I should really say "building better, more customer-responsive agencies," since there are many state and federal organizations participating with us this week. I understand that you are a very diverse group, representing not only EPA's regions, headquarters, and labs, but more than a dozen other federal and state agencies. Is anyone here from Alaska?--yes, Alaska! We may be diverse in where we work and live, but by being here you're sharing your devotion, experience and ideas about serving our many customers. Thank you all for coming, whether you've journeyed thousands of miles or walked two short blocks.

You've probably noticed that our agenda shows Mike McCabe welcoming us this morning. Well, in the two weeks that Mike's been deputy administrator, he's found that his schedule is more topsy turvy than ever. With a little luck, he'll be in Philadelphia tomorrow. And if he is, you can be sure that he'll spend some time with us here, sharing a few of his thoughts on why providing great service to our customers is so important at EPA.

As welcoming speaker, I have four pleasant tasks and very few minutes: to welcome everyone to Philadelphia and our annual customer service conference; to share a thought or two about EPA's high, but achievable, customer service expectations; to challenge you to spend your two-day investment here wisely; and to introduce EPA's new senior customer service advocate.

I can't open a customer service conference without saying that I hope that by now most of your travel and work needs are being satisfied. The EPA Region 3 hospitality committee is at your service to help with any and all last-minute arrangements. They're easy to spot in this room and around the hotel. Just look for the cheerful people with the blue ribbons on their name tags. The regional office is just two blocks away, so please let us know if there is anything we can do to help.

Let me make one overriding point that we in Region 3 have heard many times from Mike McCabe, and which he may say to us tomorrow. That is that customer service is not a new initiative concocted by the learned people at the White House or EPA headquarters, or indeed an initiative at all. It is, I hope you'll agree, an attitude that most of us share. It is a simple recognition of the importance that we place on listening to and serving our customers. Further, great customer service is most certainly not an add-on or new work to be squeezed in with our many competing priorities, but an essential way of thinking about the work we do every day.

expect this point to be emphasized and illustrated in various ways by many of the customer service leaders who we'll hear from during the next two days.

The priorities that we've pursued in Region 3 have been both simple and ambitious. Our approach is based on three important premises:

- Our key customer is the general public;
- Region 3 has a strong tradition of treating our customers well, but we can always do better; and as I emphasized a moment ago,
- Improving customer service depends essentially on having the right attitude--not on adopting a complicated new initiative.

After consultation with the region's leadership and customer service committee, we laid out a few priorities to pursue, gradually but steadily, to make the region a more customer-oriented team. Beyond the obvious requirement that we answer the mail, phone calls and now e-mail, quickly and responsively--which you know very well is not easy to do in a large agency--the region's priorities fall into a few general categories:

- Energetic, sustained leadership by our management team, which costs nothing but means more than anything else we can do for our customers;
- Accountability and recognition of our staff and managers, with clearer emphasis on customer service in our performance agreements and award criteria;
- Assessing our products and services from our customers' perspective, helping us to make improvements that they feel are most valuable;
- Expanding the extent and ease of the public's access to the agency's environmental and compliance data as we improve their usefulness to the general public; and
- Providing a short, focused orientation class to all employees, with opportunities for additional classes for staff whose jobs involve more specialized listening and negotiating skills.

We asked each division and office director to devise an action plan to make these priorities work in their organizations. I'm generally pleased with the progress of the last 18 months, but I also understand that these important activities are building blocks, not direct measures of success in improving relationships with our key customers. I look forward to hearing at this conference from people who have worked at this for years, with the persistence and leadership that we must learn to emulate in our various parts of EPA and other agencies.

As acting regional administrator for almost three weeks ago, I guess I get to brag for one minute about a few of the best things Region 3 has accomplished in the last couple of years to improve our customer service.

- Our Business Assistance Center, Customer Hotline--that's 1-800- 438-2474--and recently-reopened Public Information Center are among the best customer-focused service centers in the agency.
- Our recent focus groups with several key customer sectors revealed important lessons on outreach and access that we're already working to implement and share. Diane McCreary will talk about this at today's breakout meetings.
- We rose to the challenge of EPA's customer service steering committee, and in a few weeks will make Pat Bonner very happy by passing the 90 percent mark of our staff who has taken--and largely enjoyed--the orientation workshop "Forging the Links."
- Region 3 was one of the first to have an annual cash award to honor great

customer service, and I'm glad to see that many other parts of the agency now see the benefit of this visible recognition.

- Our Chesapeake Bay program, which has long been a leader in involving stakeholders in setting goals and solving problems, is just completing a very ambitious consultation with the public on 21st century priorities.
- The regional staff has done and is planning many other feedback activities that will enable us to better focus our products and services on customers' needs. When you start from a premise that the public has a right to know what an agency knows and what it is doing, as the administration and Carol Browner have emphasized to us, the need and usefulness of sharing information is readily expanded.

I know that you have solid accomplishments in your organization too, and I hope that this annual conference is a catalyst for sharing ideas that work. Let's dedicate ourselves to having many more tangible successes to talk about at next year's conference in Atlanta.

Looking at our conference agenda, I have a high expectation that the next two days will be a memorable and pleasant way to make our agency--really, our agencies-- more aware of, and more devoted to, our customers' needs. I think it strikes the right balance between the importance of leadership and the more tangible every day ways to keep our efforts focused where they belong. Take advantage of every opportunity to learn from each other, and to return home eager to do at least one worthwhile idea. You'll be hearing this appeal again, I'm sure, before you leave town--right, Derry? This evening's visit to the Mummers Museum will be a lot of fun, maybe even rivaling last year's "Taste of Texas." I've lived in Texas and I live in Philly, so I know that tonight's cheese steaks, canollis and mummer's strut have a pretty good chance of making you as happy as our good Region 6 friends made us feel last year.

After 6:00 tonight and tomorrow, walk outside and take a look at the light tower atop the PECO Energy building a few blocks from here. It's visible for miles around. You should take pride, as I do, in its message this week that "the Environmental Protection Agency listens to and satisfies its customers every day." The electricity to light the tower may not have been generated by Ben Franklin's famous EPA kite and key, but you wouldn't know it from seeing our conference logo in so many places this week. Pinned to your registration folder is a key--I'm told it's a genuine key from old Ben's day. When you leave this conference tomorrow and return to work, I hope that the key will be not just a memento of your time with us in Philadelphia, but a frequent reminder of the great changes you are creating as you lead your organization's transition to great customer service. Thank you again for coming to this conference.

It's now my pleasure to introduce EPA's newest senior leader. Rick Farrell is Associate Administrator for EPA's Office of Policy and Reinvention--soon to be named the Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation. Prior to joining EPA in June, he was Director of the Department of Energy's Office of Management and Administration. From 1995 to 1998, he was Secretary of the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, the state's largest regulatory and consumer protection agency. He was Vice President for Government Affairs at the Syntex Corporation for six years, following many years as the senior member of Senator Lawton Chiles' staff on Capitol Hill. Rick's newly organized office at EPA headquarters is clearly the best place to house EPA's customer service group, and we're expecting a lot of innovation ideas to flow through and from Rick's office. His remarks will give us a glimpse of his early customer service thoughts, and we're so glad that he's with us this morning. Ladies and gentlemen, EPA Associate Administrator Rick Farrell.

EPA's Customer Service Program

Rick Farrell
EPA Associate Administrator,
Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation

I am delighted to be here. Because the Customer Service Program is part of my office, I have a strong interest in making sure that service excellence is recognized as one of EPA's core values. I really believe that if we treat our customers as partners in environmental protection and use their ideas to help drive change and innovation, those changes will likely succeed.

EPA has been involving people affected by our actions for a very long time. But only since the 1993 Executive Order on Customer Service have we recognized that our work is service to customers.

I think we are making progress in achieving EPA's customer service vision. For those who are not familiar with it, I'll read the vision:

> "As we achieve our mission of protecting public health and the natural environment, EPA people are customer focused, our products and services customer driven, and our customers satisfied."

The activities helping to move us toward the vision include

- feedback and measurement -- through formal surveys of all kinds, focus groups, meetings and informal feedback

- training -- about 1/3 of our workforce has taken customer service training

- focused service improvement projects — -- for example voice mail, e-mail and a permitting tool kit

- recognizing and rewarding the best in service – through
  - quarterly, monthly and annual cash and non-monetary awards, and
  - simply by sharing stories about what our star service providers do and

- benchmarking and information sharing through events like this conference

This is only the Second EPA Annual Customer Service Conference. And I believe we are the only Federal agency that has tackled holding such an event. Last year in Plano Texas over 200 people attended, and went back to their offices knowing that they could and would improve customer service. Many of them are with us again.

This year, to enrich the learning and sharing, we made the effort to seek out more state and federal agency partners to add to our EPA mix. Looking out on this group, it seems we succeeded........by show of hands, how many of you do not work for EPA? And how many of you represent state agencies?

I ask that because I know a little about what it takes to deliver outstanding customer service at the state level. As Secretary of the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, the state's largest regulatory and consumer protection department, I learned how important it can be to learn what the public expects and deliver it well. And on Capitol Hill, when I was Chief of Staff and Legislative Director for Senator Lawton Chiles, there was no doubt that great constituent services made everything else we did possible and better.

For me, it's clear that when we change products, processes, service and programs we can't do it for us and with just us -- on our own. We have to understand and respect customers needs.
If we change things for us and not for and with our customers, we will fail. Innovation cannot be for its own sake. It has to produce customer oriented outcomes. If we don't ask our customers what they want and what's important to them, – as Al Gore told us several years back – we will get it wrong!

That is one reason why I am pleased that the CSP is emphasizing customer feedback and measurement. We can't assume we are getting better. We have to prove it by what customers tell us.

This conference gives all of us in this room the opportunity to discuss and share experiences about our customer service successes and failures of all types, but especially in the customer feedback and satisfaction measurement arena. You may notice I said the word failures. We must be able to take risks; our "corporate culture" must support the courageous! Leaders and leading organizations have the freedom to fail once in a while —as long as they learn and grow from those experiences. I expect you'll hear about some great failures during the next two days!

EPA is expanding its formal and informal customer feedback activities. But that's not an end in itself...... If we collect customer input, we have to use it. Customers expect that of us, and I personally expect to see innovations succeed at EPA.... based on what customers tell us.

The success of the CSP or any culture change is dependent on the successes of individuals, on their learning and applying their knowledge, and on their leading change. As you participate in this conference, listen for those innovative ideas that you can take and apply right now in your personal work. Listen for those that you can bring back and help make work for your organization. And listen for those that you think should be taken EPA-wide or even government-wide.

And now my challenge.....During the final session, be ready to suggest

- one thing that you would like EPA's Customer Service Program to support and lead across EPA.....
- one innovation I can take on to help EPA improve its services or
- — with the help of NPR – one activity we can lead for government.

We have an agenda that will help creativity flow. The best way to encourage creativity is to bring creative people together and start them talking. So let's get started with one of the people who innovates, who does lead, does dare and will help you dare too.......
Mr Charles Jeffress – Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Heath

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
Charles N. Jeffress
Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health

Thanks, Rick. I'm pleased to be here today because I think that EPA and OSHA have common problems.

In one sense, EPA's customers are everyone who drinks water or breathes the air. In that same sense, OSHA's customers are half of all Americans–everyone who's working. For all practical purposes, every man, woman and child in the U.S. has a stake in clear water, clean air and safety in the workplace.

- Department store owner John Wanamaker reportedly said, "The customer is always right." That approach makes sense for a business. A company that wants to build an unparalleled reputation for service may be willing to stand the loss when a customer really isn't right.
- But it won't work for a regulatory agency because fully pleasing one customer inevitably leads to displeasing another. And when our goal is simply pleasing the customer standing in front of us, we have failed to serve our true customer–the American public.

- However, even if we can't please every one of our customers, we need to provide good service. We need to be fair and impartial, and we need to be prompt in responding to customer requests, concerns and complaints. Complaints is one area that OSHA needs to focus on according to NPR's recently released report.
- Of course, sometimes it seems as if we can't please anyone. EPA and OSHA are the regulators everyone loves to hate. We're reviled and ridiculed at the same time. Just whispering our name brings money into the coffers of half the trade associations in Washington. And we're still trying to dispel the rumor that OSHA killed the tooth fairy by prohibiting dentists from returning extracted teeth to children.
- Yet others, including Ralph Nader, take us to task for not conducting more inspections, issuing more citations, proposing more penalties. They suggest that we are toothless tigers, no longer up to the task of enforcing the law. Too strong or too weak? Too timid or too aggressive? Or both at the same time?
- No one loves a regulator! My father spent 40 years in private industry as an engineer. Once I got this job, I shared with him my observation that the OSHA staff are hard working and work a lot. He responded that is what is wrong with the country, the regulators are working 12 hours a day.
- Part of the problem is that costs and benefits appear to accrue to different groups. When it comes to occupational safety and health, most people think the benefits accrue to workers and their families while the costs are borne by employers. That's only partly true. The reality is that a safe workplace benefits employers as much as it does employees.
- A safe workplace is a more productive workplace. Workers know they are valued. That makes it easier to attract and retain employees–and when unemployment sits at 30-year lows, that's vital.
- Safety provides bottom line benefits as well. Our studies have shown that employers get a $4 to $6 return on every $1 they spend on safety and health.
- Environmental costs and benefits are no doubt similar. We all enjoy clean water, fresh air and a beautiful view. In a very real sense, we are all stakeholders in the

environment. And while business may be in the vanguard for restoring and maintaining the environment, we all have a role to play–recycling, conserving energy, using mass transportation or car pooling. And we all reap the benefits.

- Indeed, convincing the American public of its corporate stewardship of the environment through individual daily actions is one of EPA's greatest success stories. Re-cycling and energy conservation have become cultural norms in only one generation. We admire EPAs success in getting recycling incorporated into the education of our children.
- Yet, we often find, while our outreach efforts are welcomed, our regulatory actions are not universally admired. In part, that's because some people feel left out of the regulatory process. That's what we learned through our Customer Satisfaction survey.
- We in OSHA have prided ourselves on our efforts to involve our stakeholders in developing regulations. Yet we learned from the customers surveyed on our behalf--safety and health professionals--that many of them felt left out of the process. That doesn't make sense to us. We know we keep them informed. We know we encourage their participation. And their professional organizations have shared comments with us in virtually every OSHA rulemaking. But the perception among the individuals we surveyed is that they would welcome more direct involvement with OSHA in its rulemaking.
- So we need to address that perception. Next week (second week in December 1999) our senior managers will be gathering for a special retreat. One of the most important topics will be our communications strategy--our outreach to safety and health professionals and others throughout the U.S. Involving professional, trade and union groups is not enough. We need to reach individuals directly. We have got to go beyond communicating with organizations, and focus on the individuals as well.
- The Government-wide customer satisfaction survey reminds us that communication with our customers must be a two-way street. One source of feedback we've found helpful is our advisory committees. We have special committees for maritime and construction, and we have an overall advisory committee focusing on occupational safety and health across industry sectors. These committees provide feedback on rules we're developing, review our strategic plan and weigh in on other issues.
- For example, the construction committee formed its own subgroup to address ergonomics in construction since our proposal focuses only on general industry. This group developed its own guidelines for preventing musculoskeletal disorders in construction–and those recommendations now appear on our website under the auspices of the committee.
- The Internet has been an excellent tool for us to serve our customers. All of our regulations appear on the site, as well as inspection instructions for our field staff, publications, news releases and links to other materials. We also have special interactive software we've developed called "compliance advisors." These software packages walk our customers through some of the more complicated OSHA standards–helping them determine whether they're covered and what they need to do.
- We've also developed a special page for small business to help them get the information they need. Can't find it on the website? Push a button to contact our small business liaison to get the help you need. Personal attention and hand-holding–rare commodities in bureaucracies and fast-paced Washington. Our liaison may refer small businesses to one of our local offices or to our free consultation service for face-to-face help.
- We are hoping that the Internet will also help us to allow our customers to get involved in our rule making by placing draft rules on our website and allow comments through e-mail.
- We are attempting to better serve small businesses in many ways. The SBREFA

process is one, of course. In addition, last spring we held a national small business forum to describe OSHA services for small businesses. Since then we've held eight similar regional forums. And we're planning another national session next spring that will focus on specific issues of interest to small businesses, such as ergonomics.

- We're also looking at developing partnerships that benefit small businesses. We're now talking with Home Depot about including OSHA safety information in the quarterly training sessions they hold for small contractors. We're planning to begin with a pilot project in Texas. Small contractors are hard for us to reach. So this partnership will give us a unique opportunity to get information to them.
- One of the customer service problems we face as regulatory agencies is that the regulatory process and subsequent enforcement activity have been viewed primarily as an adversarial proceeding–a win-lose proposition.
- We need to help the customers we deal with every day–as well as the general public–rethink that mind set. We're moving in that direction. Our compliance officers are being trained to help employers analyze safety and health systems and give advice on how to improve safety performance. The advice is free, voluntary, and employers are free to take it or leave it. Bur our folks are providing suggestions that help employers do a better job–and the employers appreciate it.
- We could do our job without those extras–just come in and run down the checklist. But we serve our customers–including the taxpayers–better when we focus on what the employer is doing right and what could be better–even if there's no violation of OSHA standards with the current set-up.
- OSHA is in the midst of a paradigm shift that began with the NPR reinvention process and is continuing through GPRA. We've got a firm grip on our mission–sending every worker home whole and healthy every day–and now we're getting a GRIP on new ways of working to achieve that goal.
- Part of that approach is signified by the acronym GRIP–getting results and improving performance. We've developed a new model for our area offices--the 66 offices that conduct federal OSHA inspections. That new structure is team-based.
- It's part of our strategy for delivering performance-based results and achieving the goals in our strategic plan. We've given our local offices training in problem-solving and the breakthrough process. With these tools, they've addressed local problems and formed partnerships. This is a pro-active approach based on local needs and local experience. We're planning to include the same training we provided each area office in the initial compliance officer training we provide for new hires.
- Part of our new paradigm involves viewing employers and employees as potential partners. We've been expanding partnership opportunities–primarily at the local level. Sometimes these partnerships are industry-based, such as steel erection in Colorado, poultry processing in Georgia or the construction industry in Florida. Or they may cut across a variety of industries like the LeHigh Valley Partnership in Pennsylvania and the Cowtown partnership in Texas.
- Virtually all of our partnerships include outreach and training and a commitment on the part of individual work sites to develop effective safety and health programs.
- OSHA has had a partnership program for the best of the best–the Voluntary Protection Program–for more than 17 years. VPP recognizes exemplary employers that establish effective safety and health programs. Together the 570 employers in these programs are saving $110 million each year thanks to 50 percent fewer injuries. Star employers serve as models–and in some cases mentors–for others in their industries of how to do it right. We need to tap these private resources to help us achieve our goals.
- They also help OSHA in many other ways. They lend us their employees to serve as

Special Government Employees and join us on VPP evaluation teams. They help train our compliance officers. They testify before Congress and at public hearings during our standard-setting process. This partnership has proven to be a valuable resource for us and a source of recognition and pride for the participants.

- Our focus on partnership is an excellent way to leverage our resources and better serve our customers. But increasing partnerships does not mean abandoning enforcement. Far from it. In fact, we're now doing better by our customers with our enforcement strategy.
- The key to improved inspection targeting has been better data. In the past, we targeted employers based on high hazards within specific industries.
- For a long time, Congress and others have urged us to focus on the individual sites with poor records. And we're now doing that. Since 1996, we've been collecting occupational injury and illness data each year from 80,000 individual sites.
- We use the data for targeting inspections and alerting employers to their high injury rates. Each year, we will send letters to about 12,000 employers with the worst records. In addition to advising people they made our list because of their high rates, we encourage them to take steps to improve–to contact a private consultant, to call their insurance company, to arrange a visit from the free state consultation service. And above all, to establish a safety and health program.
- By the end of this year, OSHA inspectors will visit about 2,200 of these sites–beginning with those whose injury and illness rates are four times the private sector average. Focusing our inspections is also part of serving our customers. We must see that employees most at risk receive the protection they need. We want to ensure that employers most in need of OSHA help get it. And we serve the American taxpayer well by spending our resources wisely.
- There's another aspect to customer service that we all need to address–and that's our internal customers -- our own employees. If we don't communicate well within our own agencies, how can we hope to communicate to the broader communities we serve?
- This is an area that we've begun to work on within OSHA. When we surveyed our own people more than a year ago, we found that they were not all on board in terms of OSHA's approach to its mission. We've gone back and revisited this issue in small groups.
- Peter Drucker has said, "To satisfy the customer is the mission and purpose of every business." I believe customer satisfaction is an important component of government service. That doesn't mean trying to please every person every time, especially for regulatory agencies. And in the customer satisfaction survey that OSHA participated in this summer, you will see our results will be low for all of government. We surveyed the people we regulate and our score will reflect that people are not always happy with regulators.
- But we can still regulate with professionalism and inspect with courtesy. Even if our customers aren't happy with the results, we want them to respect the services being provided.
- This means making progress toward our goals–reducing injuries and illnesses and deaths in the workplace–or improving the quality of our environment.
- It means that those who contact us have a right to prompt answers and fair treatment. Those who complain need to be heard. Those who want a seat at the table need the opportunity to participate in rulemaking. Those who seek information should get it.
- The Postal Service has it right–"We deliver for you." That's the commitment we need to make as federal agencies and as individual civil servants. That's what customer service is all about – is delivering for the American public.

- I know we in OSHA still have a ways to go to achieve the goals we want. I commend you in EPA for convening this conference to address how you will approach the topic. I look forward to learning from you what succeeds for EPA as we both seek to deliver even better services to the citizens of our country.

Question and Answer Session:
<u>Question #1:</u> When you started targeting the most hazardous sites for inspections, did those not on the list start relaxing in their compliance efforts?
Answer: Yes they started relaxing, but we are surveying and measuring what is happening in those sites. The reality is, though, that we have only so many resources and we need to focus our efforts on those most hazardous sites where people are getting hurt. Focus on the worst.
<u>Question #2:</u> Does OSHA have a customer service program?
Answer: OSHA does not a formal program, but President has asked me to serve on a committee to look at customer service. I am impressed with EPA's program.
<u>Question #3:</u> Background information on proposed regulation on ergonomics.
Answer: People are hurting and it represents 1/3 of all injuries on the job. What is new is the science of ergonomics is growing. Given the high number of people hurting we need to focus on what we can do. Our proposed regulations focus on what industry is already doing. We need to look at what businesses can do to have less stressful work environments. It will save the businesses money and protect the workers.

Session Name and Time: The Big Picture on Customer Feedback (Plenary session)

Featured Speaker: Ann Laurent, Associate Editor, Government Executive Magazine

Presentation Summary: The quality of customer service is the same in the private sector as it is in the public sector. Some organizations are good, some are bad. For every Nordstroms, there's a Sears. The difference is that the public sector is more closely scrutinized and reported on more widely.

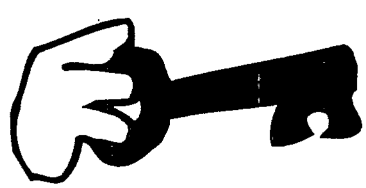
Since the Vietnam War and Watergate in the 1970s, the perception of government has declined drastically. Nevertheless, government agencies and workers must question if these perceptions reflect opinions about themselves. Much of the negative feelings towards government are directed toward politicians, not government agencies. Additionally, a growing number of citizens acknowledge that the country faces complex problems and that the government itself is not to blame.

Through the Government Performance Review, the Government Executive Review conducted a study on the performance of 15 agencies and found that success and satisfaction depended on how customers were defined. For example, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) instituted user fees to allow pharmaceutical companies to pay for fast tracking drug approval. The drug companies loved this and were very pleased. However, consumers were not as happy. Did the FDA give drug companies too much at the expense of consumers. Has public health remained the number one concern? These are legitimate public policy questions.

Government must not try to please one customer at the expense of the other. This is exactly what happened at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). In the early 90's, with the implementation of GPRA, Congress pressured the IRS to increase tax collection rates. The IRS set goals and put pressure on IRS managers who, in turn, pressured tax payers. The IRS tried to please Congress at the expense of citizens. Finally, dissatisfied citizens went back to Congress to complain about the IRS. The whole thing went full circle when Congress went back to the IRS and told them to behave.

Despite mixed signals from Congress, the Government Performance Review found many success stories. The Federal Supply Service in the Department of Defense had great success going to a fee based system and is now run more like a store. Staffers get cost data and take ownership of their jobs. The U.S. Forest Service in California also had great results using "Forest Service Enterprises," autonomous business units run by employees who were going to be let go when the Forest Service budget was cut. These units market their services to the Forest Service and charge billable hours. As a result, the Forest Service has cut costs, yet provides better service. Finally, despite what happened at the IRS, GPRA is a step in the right direction. It is essential to tie agency roles and their funding.

Customer service is much more complicated than learning better phone manners or doing feedback surveys. The key is for government to become more efficient by applying limited resources more wisely. To accomplish this, staffs must share the "bottom line," take ownership of their responsibilities and demonstrate a sense of urgency. Information technology can help in this process, but information must get in the right hands and be used thoughtfully.



Nevertheless, government is headed in the right direction. This conference is a reason for hope. In that respect, government is ahead of the private sector, because a conference like this would never happen in the private sector.

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Speech presented at EPA' Second National Customer Service Conference, November 30- December 1, 1999

"The Big Picture on Customer Feedback"

Anne Laurent
Associate Editor - Government Executive Magazine

Good Morning. I was initially a little intimidated by the title of my presentation, "The Big Picture on Customer Feedback." The customer service picture is so big and my telescope is so small. But then I realized it really is a license to poke around government and beyond to come up with some good stories. And in my line of work, we like nothing better than a good story!

First of all, let me tell a few stories to lay to rest the myth that customer service is vastly better in the private sector than in government. Take for example my efforts to get here today. I called the company travel agency a half dozen times last Monday morning to get train tickets from Washington to Philadelphia. Each time I called the phone rang and rang and no one answered. Finally, in sheer exasperation, I called the number they list for leisure travel. Three times I was put on hold listening to that dreadful elevator music before being dumped into the voice mail of our account executive. Finally, at quarter to 3 in the afternoon, I got through.

Or how about the four weeks and six different technicians it took for Bell Atlantic to install a second telephone line in my apartment in 1997? At one point they managed to entangle our primary phone line with a neighbor's so neither she nor we could receive phone calls for a whole day—the day of her 75th birthday, as it turned out.

How many homeowners do we have in the audience? Aha, well *you* all know how efficient private businesses are! Owning a house is filled with revelations about customer disservice. For example, did you know that you can buy a Sears Kenmore washing machine over the telephone . . . but they don't take Visa? We found out that you're out of luck unless you're willing to haul yourselves out to the nearest Sears to present your credit card while the broken washer is leaking all over the basement at home!

And has anyone here ever shopped at IKEA? Ever tried to follow the instructions for assembling their Ivar bookshelves? Hey, it's a big country and someone's got to frustrate it!

One key lesson about customer dissatisfaction with government is that it may not be so much better in the private sector after all. It's just that no one REPORTS all consumers' laments about companies. I keep hearing about how companies are trying to delight customers and establish customer intimacy. Well, I can't remember feeling loved by any store or service provider anytime lately. Can you?

Of course government is and should be held to a higher standard than the not-so-service-oriented private sector. Federal agencies are guardians of the public trust and the public purse. But as we struggle to get our arms around customer service in the federal setting, it's important to remember that for every story about Nordstrom there's one you may not have heard about Sears; and for every Dell Computer there's a Bell Atlantic.

It's also important to explore more deeply the general perceptions about customer service in government. It turns out that things are a bit more complicated than they would seem. At first glance, it appears the public's perception of service by federal agencies and civil servants is horrible. EPA's own customer service Web site proclaims that "the people's trust in government plummeted from 76% in the mid-1970's to 17% in the mid -1990's"

But let's take a closer look. How do we know whether the public's perception of government the same thing as its perception of services provided by federal employees working for specific agencies. In March 1998, the Pew Center for the People and The Press released surveys showing that the public's frustration is directed more at politicians than at civil servants. By a margin of 67 percent to 16 percent, the public has more trust in federal workers to do the right thing than in elected officials. The poll also showed that Americans viewed a number of agencies more favorably in 1997 than they did ten years earlier, among them, the postal service, the National Park Service, Defense Department, FDA, NASA, EPA and Agriculture.

It's also important to recognize that we Americans have high expectations for our government.

- Fully 72 percent of those polled believed the government should see to it that no one is without food, clothing or shelter,
- 68 percent said it is the federal government's responsibility to manage the economy, 46 percent expected federal agencies to provide for the elderly,
- And 52 percent say government is responsible for conserving natural resources.

It *is* true that Americans don't feel those expectations are being met. Most have an abysmal view of federal agency performance: 74 percent say that the government does only a fair or poor job managing programs and providing services; and 64 percent agree that when a program is run by government it is usually inefficient and wasteful.

But the data also point out that people are beginning to understand that there's a pretty wide gulf between what they expect and what federal agencies can deliver. You EPA folks know how many levels of government, private companies, nongovernmental groups and individuals are involved in protecting the environment. No single federal agency alone can be held responsible for protecting natural resources. And when they were asked to look more closely at specific issues government takes on, many of those polled acknowledged the complexity of government's problems. For example, 48 percent those who give the government low marks on health care blamed the complexity of the issue while 45 percent blamed the government.

So it turns out that the private sector isn't as good at customer service as we hear, and the public's perception of government isn't as bad, or at least is lot more complicated, than we thought. Just for fun, let's now take a closer look at some agencies' effort to satisfy their customers.

This past February, *Government Executive* published the results of the first year of the Government Performance Project, a joint effort with Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs to rate management capacity and performance in agencies that have high levels of interaction with the public. Among the many things we learned about the 15 agencies we studied in 1998, was that the results they achieved depended to a great degree how they defined who their customers were. We also found that an agency's efforts to please one group of customers often conflicted with the needs of another group of customers.

Take the Food and Drug Administration for example. FDA's budget has been rising more than 6 percent a year since 1992, but most of the increase comes from user fees paid by one set of agency customers—the pharmaceutical companies the agency regulates. The fees have created a complicated set of incentives that raise the possibility that the agency could be driven to focus increasingly on industry priorities, even if this interferes with the broader mission of consumer protection.

FDA was very careful to keep health outcomes at center stage when putting in place the user fees and the faster drug approval process they fund, and the agency does not believe public health is being compromised at the moment. Nevertheless, it's a legitimate public policy question whether the incentives created by FDA's reliance on user fees may eventually give pharmaceutical companies a greater say than consumers in how FDA uses its resources. And the dilemma will continue: FDA proposes to raise an estimated $740 million in fees over the next five years.

The recent troubles at the IRS are an example of what happens when an agency tries too hard to please one set of stakeholders. In the 1990s, the IRS listened closely to members of Congress, arguably its most powerful stakeholders, and set a strategic goal—closing the gap between taxes owed and taxes collected.

IRS managers were consulted about performance goals to achieve the strategic objective. The larger goal was translated into annual performance targets in regions and districts. Numerical goals quickly filtered to the front line, often at employees' initiative. Performance was eagerly and assiduously measured. Offices competed; collections increased. Nevertheless, the performance measurement effort turned out to be a key contributing factor in the agency's worst crisis in more than a decade.

The focus on collecting taxes brought increased pressure on managers, some of whom sweated their staffers, who, in turn, squeezed laggard taxpayers harder than may have been appropriate. Now IRS is moving to bring its measures back into sync. The new IRS chief, Charles Rossotti, is imposing new performance measures to balance business results, customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. "We have struggled because our focus on enforcement was out of balance with formal policies that prohibited the use of those statistics as a basis for evaluating front-line employees," he told executives at the 1998 IRS business meeting. "Confusion was common and we made mistakes. We're now turning this around."

The experiences of the FDA and IRS are not uncommon in government. No agency has yet developed a foolproof way to please all its customers at the same time. These stories are cautionary tales for all agencies. Striking out boldly to answer the complaints of one group of stakeholders or involving any one group exceedingly deeply in agency operations can have unintended results. In many if not most cases, Congress has handed agencies multiple, often conflicting, missions so picking your way through all the potential customers to improve service overall is like negotiating a minefield. Don't be fooled when some group of stakeholders returns their customer survey cards with high marks. There's undoubtedly another group lurking in the shadows ready to pounce.

So given the challenges, is anyone in government succeeding at the customer service game. Sure. And some of the examples may surprise you. You'll recall that back in 1993, one of the key National Performance Review targets for reform was administrative services within government. Finance, procurement, personnel and other such offices were supposed to cut staffing and either become competitive with private firms offering similar services or cede the ground to those firms and go out of business altogether. Well, a funny thing happened on the road to competition, some of government's most venerable administrative monopolies, such as procurement shops, got much better.

Staffers at the General Services Administration's (GSA) Federal Supply Service (FSS), for example, were shocked into success when they were forced to benchmark against private-sector firms and become a fee-for-service operation. FSS negotiates and oversees government-wide contracts covering 4 million items—ranging from test tubes to inner tubes—offered by more than 6,300 companies to every agency in government. Using the size of the government as leverage, FSS's 432 employees negotiate below-market prices on most items and services. Today, the GSA schedules, as the contracts are called, are booming. Sales are up nearly 100 percent, from $4 billion in 1995 to $7.7 billion in 1998, and they're on track to top $10 billion for this year. Behind the boom in sales is a revolution in business brought on by near catastrophe in 1995.

That year, the Clinton administration targeted GSA as an example of bureaucracy gone bad. To save itself from elimination, GSA underwent a top-to-bottom business review that subjected every business line, including FSS, to rigorous comparison with private-sector counterparts. Lines that couldn't compare were closed. FSS was forced to shape up from being a slow, rigid, limited-quantity, low-quality, mediocre-price outfit, to a lean, fast, hungry, customer-oriented, hard-bargaining buying shop.

FSS has transformed itself into a fee-based enterprise and that has made all the difference. FSS staff members have a very different perspective of their role than they did five years ago. They regularly are presented with revenue and cost data about the contracts they manage. The result has been that most staffers now are taking ownership of those contracts and working hard to gather information from their federal customers about areas in which new contracts are needed and improvements that can be made to those already in place.

Some agencies have reached far beyond administrative services into the very core of their operations to shape new, entrepreneurial ways of operating. Planning and creating trails, measuring the lumber yield of trees, and reporting the environmental impact of new forest roads or buildings are at the very center of the U.S. Forest Service's mission. Hardly the sort of things an agency would consider handing off to businesses to perform. But in California, in the Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Region, 18 small businesses are performing all those functions and many more. The twist is that Forest Service employees are running these business enterprises.

Staff cuts and flat budgets through the 1990s had left the forests increasingly short of skills needed for safeguarding and harvesting trees, granting grazing rights and providing recreation facilities for visitors. But instead of trying to make ends meet by putting longtime, highly skilled employees out of their jobs, or hiring private firms to fill in, or simply by doing less, forests in California are turning loose their employees to open their own businesses.

Many of these enterprises began a year ago with a single employee and already have begun hiring others. They are fully self-supporting on the fees they charge forest managers. You can't get more customer-focused than that! These folks' salaries, upkeep and their very survival as Forest Service employees rest on keeping their customers happy. You bet they pay plenty of attention to them. Freed from the need to answer to any single boss or organization, Forest Service enterprisers can focus all their time on providing or marketing services. No more do they sit in meetings that aren't germane to the job, no more do they get pulled off in unprofitable directions to answer phones and e-mail and deal with crises. Their goal is to amass as many billable hours as possible and their means is a singular, unshakeable focus on what forest supervisors want.

You'll notice that my examples of organizations effectively providing customer service also are fee-based and bottom-line focused. That's because this year I began covering a new beat called "Entrepreneurial Government," for *Government Executive* and I've become something of a true believer.

While the private sector is no paragon of customer service, as we've seen, there's a reason that most of the few existing examples of truly great customer coddling are found among companies. The reason is that poor service has financial consequences for businesses—sometimes in the short term, but almost inevitably in the long term. For example, Sears nearly went bankrupt about 10 years ago and they may still go under.

I believe that government agencies hoping to improve their services must devise a bottom line similar to that in industry. Administrative organizations increasingly are doing that and their service is improving. When your existence depends on fees, you quickly develop an unwavering interest in the source of those fees. Those operations that can't compete increasingly are losing their agency customers to more customer-friendly shops either in other agencies or in the private sector.

Of course most agencies aren't in the administrative services business. Many, like EPA, regulate businesses and that's hardly a function that can be performed by business itself. So how do these organizations build in a bottom line?

The Government Performance and Results Act can help, but only if Congress and the White House really play along by tying agency funding to measurable improvements in results. Agencies have a long way to go before they will be able to parse out and then measure their specific role in achieving a given result. And congressional appropriators appear unlikely to give up the political power conveyed by holding the purse strings in order to play by the Results Act rules.

Another hopeful development is the recent approval by Congress of two performance-based organizations, the Education Department's Office of Student Financial Assistance and just this month, the Patent and Trademark Office. Each will be freed from certain personnel and procurement rules and run by executives whose salaries depend on meeting fairly strict performance goals. But these are just two small agencies in an ocean of federal organizations.

That's why I told you the story of the Forest Service enterprises. They offer a vision of a federal future tied to bottom-line results. The enterprisers remain Forest Service employees. Their very blood runs green, they tell me, and most have no interest in leaving government. Yet they also are small business people fully conscious of costs and prices and utterly attentive to their customers who are the folks who manage national forests.

Enterprisers' cost consciousness is catching. Already they have forced better accounting and better service from the organizations that house them and provide services for them as well as from their customers. With the advent of enterprising, forest supervisors now must weigh whether to have regular employees or enterprisers perform projects. Since the regular employees already are paid for, you'd think enterprisers wouldn't have a chance. But they succeed against bad odds because of their single-minded focus on delivering so much value that they're worth the extra cost. After just a year in operation, the majority of enterprises already are bringing in enough revenue to more than meet their costs. Now the Forest Service is moving to expand the enterprise experiment to two more regions.

You ought to know, by the way, that a number of enterprises make all or part of their living helping forests handle the analysis, reporting and extensive public involvement required by laws such as the National Environmental Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act. By specializing in streamlining environmental planning or responding to public comment or appeals, the enterprises have developed sought-after skills. By hiring enterprises, rather than leaving less specialized regular employees to less efficiently handle environmental impact and planning, forest supervisors can reapply their increasingly scarce human resources to improve direct service to forest users. That may seem an indirect route to improving service to citizens, but it appears to be working and it is applicable throughout government.

This probably hasn't been the sort of speech you expected at a conference like this one. I don't have much to say about customer satisfaction surveys or mass customization or feedback or improved telephone manners. As you can tell, I believe that identifying the right customers and then efficiently and effectively satisfying them are more complicated than the usual approaches imply.

At base, getting real-world results and satisfying customers are about applying your limited resources wisely and getting the most bang for your buck. You can't do that unless and until the whole staff shares some kind of bottom-line mentality and the urgency that comes with it. Then managers just have to believe in the worker bees. Once we understand how our work relates to the survival and success of the organization, trust us, we'll come up with all kinds of ideas about how to get up close and personal with the folks we need to please to keep the money coming.

What we are learning as we conduct the Government Performance Project is just how many challenges stand between most federal workforces and that clear understanding of costs and the bottom line. At most agencies:

- Financial management is poor and doesn't deliver cost information.
- Information technology is everywhere, but rarely gets the right information to the right people at the right time.
- Agencies own lots of capital assets, but they don't know whether the equipment they have is the best suited to doing the job.
- Federal organizations are interacting more with their citizen customers, but may not be asking them the right questions.
- Agencies surely are providing more information to their congressional customers, but it's often inscrutable or left unused or misused. What's more, few agencies have devoted much effort to working with legislators to clarify their missions.
- And as downsizing continues, many departments have found they bought out precisely the wrong people and then failed to provide enough of the right kind of training to enable the remaining staff to shoulder the growing workload.

But we also see signs that these challenges are being overcome. Later today, Pam Johnson of the NPR will tell you about some of the startlingly good ratings agencies have received on the American Customer Satisfaction Index, an independent economic indicator that measures customer satisfaction. Ask her to tell you the truly inspiring tale of the Veterans Affairs Department's outpatient clinics and how they achieved marks that were better than the overall average in the private sector. Or talk with the Coast Guard, whose shift from enforcement to cooperation with the fishing industry led to an education effort that has reduced the accidental death rate for fishing boat crew members. Now those are some satisfied customers.

Government may have some performance problems, but it is doing many things right and a number of things better than the private sector ever could. That this conference is happening at all is a reason for hope. My hat's off to all of you and thanks for the invitation to tell you some tales.

Descriptions of all Breakout sessions during EPA's National Customer Service Conference
November 30 - December 1, 1999

Breakout Sessions

Day 1 - DIFFERENT WAYS WE LISTEN

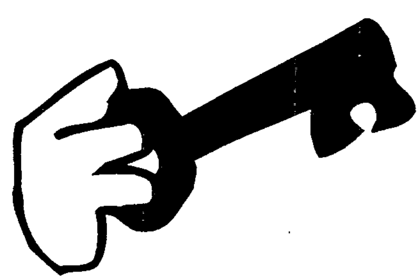
1. Environmental Complaints Handling System - Managing for customers & compliance
   Moderator/Discussant: Tom Reich (EPA - Region 6)
   Speakers: Lynn Moss and Judy Duncan, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality
   - customer oriented program with a uniform complaint investigation process, central
     repository for complaints and direct citizen involvement - al set in the Department's Regulations
   - well trained staff with appropriate tools (including a 24/7 hotline with real people) and procedures to provide fast, personal customer service, achieve compliance, and resolve complaints
   - how all this works for customers and staff

2. Performing Surveys on a Shoestring
   Moderator/Discussant: Barry Nussbaum (EPA)
   Speaker: Colleen Blessing (DOE)
   - How do you start a customer survey; what do you need to know?
   - Questionnaire design Do's and Don't
   - Actual (& Lots of different experiences "surveying on a shoestring"
   - One step up from the "shoestring level" (technologies)
   - The New Hot Topic! Testing the Usability of Your Website

3. Benefits of Focus Groups & FACAs
   Moderator/Discussant/Speaker: Clarence Hardy (EPA)
   Speaker: Diane McCreary (Region 3 -EPA)
   - Building cooperation through stakeholder processed (FACA)
   - Involving FACA customers in improving service provided to them
   - Why did Region 3 choose focus groups, not surveys, and how did they select segments, participants, locations - from soup to nuts - and do the sessions?
   - The process and lessons learned from carrying it out
   - Findings about information needs of various public segments, and recommendations

4. Using Qualitative Customer Feedback to improve Programs
   Moderator/Discussant: Charlotte Cottrill (EPA)
   Speaker: Joseph Wholey (GAO)
   How to:
   - Clarify performance expectations
   - Find Qualitative feedback opportunities
   - Use customer feedback to obtain a variety of information
   - Use customer feedback to improve our programs

5. Complaints Management - Lessons Learned
   Moderator/Discussant: Kerry Weiss)EPA)
   Speaker: Dan Rumelt (CPSC)



- Lessons learned from revisiting participants in the NPR 1997 benchmarking report on complaints management
- What's happening with the CPSC's 25 year old, 24 hour/7days a week, 40 lines consumer complaints hotline now that e-mail has hit hard?
- How is 10-person CPSC staff using CPSC's 25 year old, 24 hour/7 days a week, 40 lines consumer complaints hotline now that e-mail has hit hard?
- How is 10-person CPSC staff using the mix of today's technologies to manage calls and keep customers satisfied?
- What happens when phone people have to become e-mail correspondents?

Day 2 - THE FEDERAL STORY

1. Shifting a Small Agency's Mission to Embody Customer Service
   Moderator/discussant: Karen Brown (EPA)
   Speaker: Audrey Borja (FDA)
   - Bringing the role customers into achieving the FDA Mission
   - Differences between compelled customers of regulatory agencies and customers of service providers
   - Since HQ can't create culture change in the field, what can you do to engage field office personnel in shifting to a customer focus?

2. What we know, how we know it, what we do about it - a model for customer responsiveness
   Moderator/Discussant: Michael Binder (EPA)
   Speakers: Toni Lenane and Jean Venable (SSA)
   - How SSA's market measurement program gets the right information from right people in the right way
   - How best to obtain stakeholders, customers and workforce opinions and use them to support planning and implement change - what works for SSA
   - Putting the systems in place, creating accountability, making improvements that customers and staff value

3. Using Electronic Media
   Moderator/Discussant: George Walker (EPA)
   Speaker: John Kavaliunas (Census Bureau)
   - How the Census Bureau communicates with its key customer segments and surveys them to obtain a variety of satisfaction measures
   - How customer feedback feeds product improvements
   - electronic advances - including e-commerce- that help census better serve its customers
   - Software that supports the new electronic aspects of Census activities
   - Communicating results of customer research throughout the agency to reenforce commitment to customers.

4. The Government-wide Survey and More - taking action
   Speakers: Heather Case (EPA - OE) and Lee Ellis (EPA's Web Group)
   - Results of EPA's add-on question about particular topics - how reference librarians have used EPA websites
   - what is the context for these results?
   - What are the topics librarians most sought on EPA's internet, how easy are those topics to find, and how satisfied were they with what they found/

- What are the potential implications for EPS? For other organizations?

5. Responding to Public Pressure
   Moderator/Discussant: Betty Winter (EPA)
   Speakers: Jim Jones, (USACE) and Judy Tomaso (IRS)
   - How agencies react to public pressure - especially congressional pressure - to hear and use what customers tell them to improve services the comments of the public
   - How IRS prioritized feedback from different groups to develop and action plan to refocus IRS on its customers
   - Spring Valley site (DC) – an upscale neighborhood - as a case study in reacting to and involving the public in a hazardous waste/clean-up

Session Name and Time: Handling Environmental Complaints

Featured Speakers: Lynne Moss, Coordinator, Pollution Response Programs, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, ans Judith Duncan, Customer Service Division Director, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality.

Moderator: Tom Reich, Region 6-EPA

Presentation Summary: Speakers discussed innovative and extensive program for handling environmental complaints in Oklahoma. The program grew out of the 1993 Environmental Quality Act passed by the Oklahoma legislature. It established the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality.

The complaints program established with the goals: (1).provide rapid response (2) Bring about regulatory compliance through a consistent and structured process. Polling of agency staff showed complaints took a low priority and were regarded as a nuisance. To change this, DEQ held pep rallies. The mantra was "Warm and Fuzzy"

The environmental complaint programs has 12 elements:

1. Environmental Complaints Hotline - Answered 24 hours a day 7 days a week. 6 full time paid staff work Monday through Friday during business hours. During evenings and weekends volunteers from the department are paid a small stipend to carry a cell phone at all times. 34 regional offices have 78 multi-media environmental investigators on staff. Outreach efforts included public service announcements, billboards listed in front section and government section of phone book. Receives 10,000 calls per year.
2. Investigator contacts customer within 2 working days.
3. Investigator on scene within 3 working days.
4. Initial correspondence with customer within 7 working days
5. Final written notification to customer within 7 working days of complaint resolution.
6. Verify violation send warning letter to violator immediately and supply customer with a copy.
7. Long term resolution customer kept informed.
8. Identification of problem areas through analysis of complaint patterns.
   -Chronic complaints - 3 complaints in 3 or more months in 6 month period.
   - High profile complaints -3 complaints for 3 months in 5 month period.
9. Target complaint - 3 complaints in a month. (These complaints receive special attention. In 1995, 13 complaints were chronic; only three in 1999.)
10. Resolve all complaints within 90 days. All complaints more than 90 days old are brought up to the Executive Director at the division directors meeting. No complaint has passed 90 day goal since 1995.
1. Complaints outside DEQ jurisdiction are referred to the appropriate agency on the customer's behalf. Customer is given a contact name and phone number at the appropriate agency in a follow up letter.
12. Access is provided to alternative dispute resolution (confidentially).

Customer satisfaction survey sent to each complainant and responsible party at end of process. 15% to 17% respond. Less than 15% are negative. Complaints sent to supervisors.

Reasons for success:

- Continuously worked on the process, looking for ways to improve.
- Change of mind set within Department.

Important Ideas from the Discussion:

1. Set goals
   A. Timeliness
   B. Measurement
   C. Reporting
2. Get feedback
3. Continue to I.D. Problem Areas
4. Think Outside the box
5. Constantly prove you mean what you say by using what you hear to improve. (DEQ collects lots of data. Staff see charts and graphs on issues and sources. Technical staff are trained in report writing. The volume of complaints resulted in septic system legislation and trash cops to enforce roadside dumping laws.

Key Questions of the Speaker:

Question: What if after investigating a complaint, no violation is found.
Answer: A letter is sent explaining what steps were taken to address the complaint and the results. Talk to resident who made complaint.

Question: How did you get the resources to undertake this program.
Answer: Reorientation of existing staff. Creation of a new agency utilizing half of what had been the Health Department. We had a directive from the legislature to establish mechanisms of accountability and develop a communication infrastructure.

Question: Does this program empower the citizenry to be a part of the State's enforcement apparatus?
Answer: It was very empowering to citizens when we stopped regarding complaints as a nuisance and regarded them as a real deal.

Question: How did you target your outreach efforts to avoid being overwhelmed
Answer: You can't target. You have to handle what you get. As this program has become successful we get more response. Our outreach efforts include slide shows, speeches going to schools and giving out refrigerator magnets with our phone # on it. We brought in staff who care and are persistent.

How can EPA use this information? We can use the Oklahoma example in marketing our hotlines and systematically monitoring feedback and follow up well as raising the customer hotlines as a priority.

Where in EPA can this information be used? Probably best at the regional level, but can be used for all 800 numbers and hotlines.

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Environmental Complaints Program
Lynne Moss - Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality was formally established in 1993 through a consolidation of the environmental programs from the Department of Health, Department of Pollution Control and the majority of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board.

The DEQ is dedicated to providing quality service to the people of Oklahoma through comprehensive environmental protection and management programs. These programs are designed to assist the people of the state in sustaining a clean, sound environment and in preserving and enhancing our natural surroundings. The DEQ will accomplish this mission through regulatory and non-regulatory means to achieve a balance that sacrifices neither economic growth nor environmental protection.

The DEQ has six divisions. Three divisions relate to specific media program areas, water quality, waste management, and air quality. The Environmental Complaints and Local Services and Customer Services are separate divisions on level equal to that of the traditional media programs. This structure helps to provide a system which facilitates the DEQ in addressing other legislative directives: responsiveness, accessibility and assistance.

Prior to DEQ, environmental agencies focused their resources on regulatory inspections and requested services thereby making citizen complaint investigation and resolution their lowest priority. At that time, complaint investigations had no uniform process, no central repository for complaints, and little citizen involvement.

Upon its creation, the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality developed a program wherein investigation and resolution of citizen complaints were the priority. This customer oriented program entailed a uniform complaint investigation process, central repository for complaints and direct citizen involvement. The Environmental Complaints Program (ECP) is one of the highest priorities for the Department and establishes three main goals:

(1) to provide rapid response to each environmental complaint;
(2) to bring about regulatory compliance through a consistent and structured process; and
(3) to keep citizens informed throughout the process.

The program is the centerpiece of the Department's mission to sustain a clean, sound environment through comprehensive environmental protection.

The ECP is unlike any other complaint program in the nation in that it is set in the Department's regulations to assure the public that they can trust DEQ to respond to their concerns appropriately.

The Complaints Office was established within the Environmental Complaints and Local Services Division and is the central repository for complaint receipt and investigation information. The Complaints Office staff is versed in environmental jurisdictions, both DEQ's and other state/federal agencies. A hotline was established for citizens to report their concerns. A computer program was developed to standardize information gleaned from the complainant and the investigator. The program provides managers with reports for tracking progress of the investigation and contact with the citizen. Procedures were written and processes were developed and implemented that allowed rapid response and a quick resolution to all environmental complaints. Regulations were written and adopted and an attorney was hired and assigned to the complaints program.

ECLS is the focal point for investigation of citizen complaints. There are 32 field offices strategically located across the state that are staffed by 63 environmental specialists. Training on complaint investigation and report writing has been provided. The immediate concern of each investigation is to determine if a violation exists. This is usually established during the first site visit. If there is a violation, the party against whom the complaint has been filed is provided notice that the violation exists. Upon request, technical assistance is provided to facilitate regulatory compliance. When compliance is not achieved, the enforcement process is designed to keep the complaint progressing toward resolution.

Early on, it was determined that a complaint, vigorously pursued, could be resolved in 90 days. A review document was set up so that managers could quickly determine that each complaint is "on target" for resolution within 90 days. Any complaint that is older than 90 days is reported to the Executive Director in a report that highlights the standardized milestones in the process that are not met.

With the focused attention, new processes and their implementation a major paradigm shift has been accomplished. Complaints are no longer the last thing we do, they are the first and most important thing we do.

Listed below are the elements of the ECP that we believe are unique in the handling of citizens' complaints. These elements are:

- A toll-free hotline manned around the clock, weekends and holidays for Oklahomans to report environmental complaints.
- From the time a complaint is received, no more that two working days will pass before the person investigating the complaint will contact the citizen.
- The investigator will be on the scene of the complaint within three working days.
- Within seven working days of receipt of the complaint, the citizen will receive correspondence that will inform the citizen what the investigator found, if a violation exists, and what action will be taken to achieve compliance.
- If a violation is found, the responsible party will receive a warning letter. This warning letter will notify the responsible party what violation was found and set a time for compliance. A copy of the warning letter is provided to the complainant to help keep them fully aware of the investigation progress.
- If resolution of the complaint is long-term, the citizen is kept informed during the entire process. Anytime an enforcement action is issued, the complainant will be notified and will receive a copy.
- Complaints will be vigorously pursued to resolution within 90 days. DEQ set a goal of resolving complaints within 90 days or receipt.
- When resolution is reached, the citizen receives written notification.
- The citizen receives a customer survey. This survey will ask the complainant how we did and allow them to comment on how their complaint was handled. Each survey is reviewed and all concerns and questions are responded to appropriately.
- If the complaint is outside the jurisdiction of the Department, the complaint will be

referred to the appropriate agency and the complainant will be notified of the referral.

- Chronic complaints or complaints where three or more citizens have expressed a concern or where a specific environmental issue persists, will receive special attention.
- Citizens are provided access to an alternative dispute resolution system that is voluntary and confidential. This mediation service is provided by an outside source to alleviate concerns about DEQ mediating issues within our authority.

Complaints within the Department's jurisdiction deal with air quality, water quality, solid waste and hazardous waste issues. DEQ has investigated an average of 6,000 complaints each year since its creation. In 1994, 90 percent of all complaints were resolved in 90 days or less. In 1995, that number soared to 98 percent. Since December 15, 1995, all complaints have been resolved within 90 days or less.

When the program began, no one was aware of the results that would be achieved. As the program was developed and fully implemented most were surprised that what were once called "nuisance complaints" were indeed serious environmental concerns. As a direct result of this program, hundreds of failing onsite sewage systems have been corrected, open dumps have been cleaned up, illegal open burning has been reduced, and facilities have been brought into compliance.

Through the implementation of two days personal contact, keeping the citizen informed, setting a goal to resolve complaints within 90 days and providing technical assistance to the responsible party, the ECP has been and continues to be diligent in its pursuit to view the public as the customer. We strive daily to meet the Department's charge of providing outstanding service to the public.

Session Name and Time: Customer Surveys on a Shoestring

Featured Speaker: Colleen Blessing, press officer/economist, Energy Information Administration, Department of Energy

Moderator: Barry Nussbaum, EPA Office of Environmental Data & Information

Presentation Summary:

Why customer feedback is a good idea & advice on how to go about it. "Talking to your customer in any way you can is better than not talking to them," Blessing said. Customer comments are important to:
* improve products and service
* find out what's important to customers
* make resource decisions
* arbitrate in-house conflict
* track progress over time

Doing surveys in-house, enables staff to actually hear the voice of the customer instead of reading what they say in a contractor's report.

Examples: At the EIA Blessing said the "web cowboys" were campaigning to get rid of all the paper and go totally electronic. Five years in a row they asked their customers in a survey whether they still wanted paper copies, the answer was loud and clear: "keep the paper." Another time the EIA management decided to install an 800 telephone number. But, again, via a survey, customers said an 800 number wouldn't make them call any more or less. The agency decided not to move forward with the idea.

Important Ideas from the Discussion: Some key do's and don't's for feedback work:
- Before you start formulating questions, decide what you need to know and what you are going to do with the results
- Don't ask questions if you are not going to make changes based on the customers opinions
- Don't do a survey if there is not a customer for your results
- Decide on your target audience, the content, the delivery method (survey, focus groups, telephone, etc.)
- Decide on how to get customers to answer and what to do (action and communication) with the results
- Never assume you know what the customers want unless they've told you
- Avoid bureaucratic language, acronyms and jargon
- Make the survey as short as possible (If you want more information, use open ended questions, but know it will take more staff and customer time. Answers can be used as feedback to support the numbers.)
- Closed ended questions -- fine if all you want is yes or no answers, no baseline for measuring degrees of improvement
- Avoid asking two questions in one (How satisfied are you with our courtesy and timeliness? Courtesy and timeliness are two different issues)

- Consider incentives to attract participants (Since federal government can't give gifts as incentives, include brochures of interest in your follow-up to let customers know you appreciate their taking the time to respond.)
- Choose a rating scale with care: 1-5 is good for measuring though it gives you a neutral position; 6 or 10 do not
- Contacting your customers - do as much as you can afford in time and money
  - Pre contact - let them know before hand you are planning to do the survey and when
  - If you send a hard copy survey, send a postage paid return envelope
  - Send a post card reminder if you have not received the response - thank you if you have received the response
  - If you need to boost response rates, send a second survey in a different color
  - Always remember to send the thank you and if you have a brochure of interest stick that in.
- Do use qualitative feedback opportunities -- Use focus groups with a moderator, and every other contact you recognize Do small sample surveys
- Always pretest the survey among friends and family (to see if they can understand your questions)
- Make people feel special: When you send the postage paid envelope try to use stamps specific to your audience. For instance, if you are trying to get an international response, order stamps from their country. It will cost slightly more, but have a personal touch.)
- Get continued support from decision-makers throughout the process.; keep them fully apprised

Key Questions of the Speaker
Question: When you do a web survey, does it have to go through OMB review?
Answer: Yes.

How can EPA use this information? To find out what's important to customers -- both on environmental issues and delivery of service.

Where in EPA can this information be used? All of the programs, environmental education, and the media

Any commitments to follow-up action at EPA: None stated.

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[redacted]

- Colleen Blessing
- Energy Information Administration
- colleen.blessing@eia.doe.gov

Where do you start?

- You need to figure out:
  - Who to ask? The target audience
  - What to ask? The content
  - How to ask? The delivery method
  - How to get customers to answer?
    - Incentives, reminders, attractive form
  - What to do with the results?

Why Collect Customer Feedback?

- Improve products and services
- Find out what's important to customers
- Make resource decisions
- Arbitrate in-house conflict
- Track progress over time
- Added bonus when done in-house: You hear the "voice of the customer"

Surveys are just one way to get feedback

- Also consider:
  - Hotlines/Information desks
  - Focus groups
  - Web mail
  - Conferences/ meetings

Before you start writing the questions:

- Decide what it is you need to know
- Get support from decisionmakers
- Remember, ask what is important to the customer
- Decide what you are going to do with the results
  - Don't ask if you can't use it
  - Don't ask if you don't plan to consider it

Overall Customer Survey Don'ts

- Don't assume you know what the customers want unless they've told you
- Don't try to do too much in one survey
- Don't use bureaucratic language

General Do's and Don'ts

- Avoid double-barreled questions (two questions in one)
- Don't use organizational names or jargon (which seems like English to you)
- Open vs. closed-ended questions
- Make the survey as short as possible
- Consider the design, paper color
- Number questions in order

More Survey Do's and Don'ts

- Balanced rating scale
- Convincing cover letter
- Simple skip patterns
- Consider incentives
- Checkboxes for common responses
- Pretest your survey

Actual Shoestring Experiences

- EIA's telephone survey
  - Agency wide, all volunteer
  - Satisfaction with products and services
    - 10 attributes: accuracy, timeliness, courtesy...
  - Paper vs. electronic question
  - Recruiting, training interviewers
    - Potential interviewer bias using volunteers
  - Over time, keep same questions?
  - Questions that just didn't work

Telephone Survey, Cont

- Length of the survey- it depends...
- Closed vs. Open-ended questions
  - Easy to tabulate vs. richness of information
- Actionable items- 800 number?
- Briefings to staff and management
- What did we learn?
  - High overall satisfaction, preference for paper, issues with timeliness
  - Small sample size, low significance

Mail Survey of Publication Subscribers

- Sent out to 4,000 customers
- Five potential contacts/reminders
  - 54 % response rate
- Good design:where to start, where to go
- Pretested in-house
- Incentives
- International customers
- Lots of data collected- in-depth in-house analysis was difficult

Other Shoestring Surveys

- CD-Rom survey- called all subscribers
- Listserv survey- emailed half of them
- Web site survey- posted on Home Page
- One-question survey- an add-on to a postcard mailing
- Webmaster mail as feedback- can be a surrogate for a web survey

One Step Up from Shoestring

- Automated telephone survey
  - Recorded survey, professional voice
  - Potentially larger sample, would raise the significance of the results
  - More realistic responses? Real person vs. telephone voice
  - Data collected by contractor
  - Survey design, analysis will be done in-house

On Step Up, cont.

- Web survey on the Web
  - Pop-up invitations
  - Invitations throughout the site
  - Data collected by contractor

Testing The Usability of Your Website

- EIA has an award winning Web site, but customers have identified problems
- One-on-One sessions with users
  - Computer, mirror, video or audiotape
- Timed exercises: find the answer
- Demographic and debriefing questions

Web Usability Test Findings

- Too much jargon
- Search engine was frustrating
- Too many buttons
- Confusing format, too many choices
- Low correlations between # of correct answers and familiarity with Internet, our site, energy terms, age

How Are We Using the Usability Results?

- Preliminary analysis in-house
- Web design contractor helped with suggestions
- Will cognitively test alternative designs
- Coordinating with our Web people, senior management, customers

Session Name and Time: Benefits of Focus Groups and FACAs

Featured Speakers: Diane McCreary, EPA Region III Librarian, and Clarence Hardy, Director, Office of Cooperative Environmental Management, EPA Headquarters

Presentation Summary: The two speakers discussed how to get customer feedback by using focus group research and through FACAs. (Details in speaker presentations.)

Important Ideas from the Discussion:

1. When using focus groups, do it the right way with a separate room for observers with no EPA people in the discussion room.
2. For some focus groups, to insure participation (without payment of the usual fees and honorariums), network or cooperate with another organization or association.
3. When a FACA is established be sure there is a Memorandum of Agreement with the appropriate program office or offices.
4. You cannot do relevant, strategic planning without listening to the customer.
5. You must measure the impact and outcome. The customer will help you do the measurement.

Key Questions of the Speaker: Nothing that had not already been covered by the speakers; most were clarification questions.

How can EPA use this information? Anyone doing focus group research should follow the format outlined by Diane McCreary, and look to the customer to help measure results. Also, both speakers' information can help in formulating administrative policy and strategies.

Where in EPA can this information be used? All program offices and anyone involved in outreach.

Any commitments to follow-up action at EPA: None stated.

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Focus Groups

Diane McCreary - EPA Region 3 Librarian

I. Why Region 3 Initiated the Focus Group Project

Most people are supportive of environmental education, but few know anything about the environment. Consider the results of a survey by the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation -- the average person only correctly answered an average of 2.2 questions, when a random response of guessing would have been 2.5. Some of the questions included:

1. What is the major source of electricity in the U.S. (burning of fossil fuels, such as coal)? 73% of survey didn't know this and thought it was either by hydro-electric power or solar.
2. What is the biggest constituent of landfill trash (paper)? Less than 50% knew this and thought it was diapers.
3. What the source of most oil pollution (used motor oil)? Less than 50% correctly answered this, believing it was oil spills.
4. What is the leading cause of childhood death worldwide? Only 9% knew it was by water-borne diseases. Others thought malnutrition or starvation.

What helped prompt the effort was a 5:15 p.m. call received by the Region III ARA. The caller had a question involving pesticides and the individual could not answer the question and didn't know to whom the call should have been referred.

Region III developed a Public Access Initiative and a Public Sector Needs Identification Team that collaborates with the Center for Environmental Information and Statistics at headquarters.

II. How We Carried out the Project

The project was funded from the Regional Administrator's discretionary fund -- about $6500 per focus group, with EPA doing the recruitment. It was decided to hold the focus groups as public meetings in lieu of the time it would have taken to seek OMB clearance. The meetings/focus groups were advertised in the *Federal Register* and local newspapers. Others who wanted to participate could sit in the observer's room and make official comments following the meeting.

The groups selected were information intermediaries, mid-size communities
Public Librarians at Charlottesville, Va.
Media at Pittsburgh, Pa.
Pediatric Medical Specialists at Pittsburgh, Pa.
Local Environmental Groups at Salisbury, Md.
Small Business at York, Pa.
K-12 Teachers at Frederick, Md.

Networks were used to find prospective participants. They were contacted by phone to

Networks were used to find prospective participants. They were contacted by phone to confirm name and title, and then sent letter "selling" project, followed up with a phone call to invite participation, and then a confirmation letter.

III. What We Learned About the Public's Environmental Information Needs

Executive summaries and the contractor's final report on all of the focus groups can be found at www.epa.gov/region3/r3lib/infoneed.htm

There were some findings common to all groups:

- A general unawareness of what EPA has made available -- hotlines, website, various publications.
- Need for human contacts, even in electronic information environment
- People were overwhelmed by the size of EPA's web site, and felt it needed better search capabilities and organization of information.
- There is still a place for traditional information dissemination--print, hotlines, etc.
- Internet access still not universal.
- There is much confusion regarding which government agency has what information.
- Acronyms and EPA jargon were universally criticized.
- There is a need for local environmental info across all groups ("I'm buying a house in a new neighborhood...." to highly technical monitoring data.)

Additional Findings:

Media: Need immediate access to people and have time constraints.
Small Business: Hesitant to contact EPA directly, want EPA to simplify regulatory language.
Teachers: Want a streamlined environmental education grants process.

IV. Lessons Learned

- Don't take rejection personally.
- Most people are incredibly generous with their time.
- Focus groups can be extremely productive but require funding and time. (Consider using other feedback methods.)
- Many needs identified in the group discussions do not require huge expenditures of resources to resolve, e.g., directories, eliminating jargon.
- It pays to partner--professional and business associations, conferences, other agencies. Specifically, for the medical focus group there was a lack of interest and many physicians were too busy. We should have teamed with Children's Hospital or another organization.
- Participants in the small business group had a fear of inspectors and the factor of confidentiality.
- If you do focus groups, do them right and with non-EPA moderators and double room facilities.
- Get out of town (Washington, Philadelphia).
- It requires a special effort to set aside previous experience and personal opinions in order to really listen (The "that's what they said, but I know what they really meant"mentality).
- Following up: the difficulties of change, convincing management and the dangers of not changing.

Federal Advisory Committees
Clarence Hardy, Director
EPA Office of Cooperative Environmental Management

The Federal Advisory Committees (FACAs) Act provides an important process for involving customers and stakeholders in environmental decision-making.

I. Overview of EPA's Federal Advisory Committee Program

The Office of Cooperative Environmental Management (OCEM) has as its mission, "To provide the administrator and the agency with expert and timely stakeholder advice as national and international environmental policy is developed and implemented. The goals are to provide excellent service to customers, to maximize partnerships and improve the process.

In the past two years, the office's reinvention initiatives have concentrated on enhancing the agency's ability to use stakeholder processes in environmental decision-making. The office created a matrix listing the 23 FACAs and referencing their involvement with the 10 agency goals and six cross agency programs.

II. Facilitating Customer and Stakeholder Involvement in Environmental Decision-Making

FACA and advisory committee programs are an effective tool for consensus building among diverse customers and stakeholders. It is a way to resolve difficult crosscutting issues associated with ensuring membership balance and quality management of committee operations.

OCEM ensures that state-of-the-art principles, concepts and techniques of public participation and the public's right-to-know are well understood and consistently practiced in all work aspects of EPA advisory committees.

The National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology (NACEPT), formed in 1988, provides a way for the public to influence public environmental policy. It is a place for public discussion and independent input on a broad range of topics, including information management, program activities and policy.

III. Ways OCEM Listens to Customers

The DFO Network is a monthly meeting of Designated Federal Officials and others who deal with FACAs. The network provides guidance to and shares information with the DFO community. OCEM also invites interested groups to its strategic planning meeting and uses its website for other information input.

The 23 FACAs range in size from 5-7 people to as many as 50 and a total of 1,400 participants who work on 234 projects. The FACAs have subcommittees and work groups and are budgeted at $16 million by the agency. Seven of the FACAs are housed in the Office of the Administrator and the rest are in program offices.

There is a need to have value-added. Total Quality Management - TQM - is not dead; it has new names. We need quality in the management process. A staff office must not exist new names. We need quality in the management process. A staff office must not exist unless it facilitates programs and provides added value.

When a FACA committee is set up there is a Memorandum of Agreement signed with a program office. You cannot do relevant, strategic planning without listening to the customer. You must measure impact and outcome of your work. Through a FACA, you have a way to listen to the customer, and the customer will help you do the measurement.

Session Name: Using Qualitative Customer Feedback to Improve Programs

Featured Speakers: Joseph Wholey, U.S. General Accounting Office, and Charlotte Cottrill, EPA Headquarters, Office of Environmental Monitoring for Public Access and Community Tracking (EMPACT)

Presentation Summary:

The session focused on acquiring informal non-numerical feedback from customers by primarily capitalizing on day-to-day experiences, focus groups, small sample surveys, and capturing themes and verbatim quotes. Through these techniques, you can get inside the heads of your customers without the hassle of time-consuming research and surveys. (Wholey and Cottrill graphics follow.)

Important Ideas from the Discussion:

- Informal qualitative customer feedback can be an important tool in improving your program.
- Informal qualitative customer feedback can help us learn what our products and services mean to our customers.
- When acquiring qualitative customer feedback, make sure you are getting information from the types of customers you want to reach.
- Intangibles learned from qualitative customer feedback can often motivate you to do a better job.
- Verbatim quotes acquired from customers during informal surveys or focus groups can be very powerful is summarizing data.
- A sample of 15-25 customers can often give you a good general picture of how you are doing.
- You should always be on the lookout to seize opportunities where you can gather qualitative customer feedback.
- If you get feedback, use it to improve programs, products and services.
- EMPACT is a 4-year Presidential effort, a series of *real* community -driven partnerships with EPA, USGS & NOAA, to be in 86 communities by 3/2000 and the communities will own the data that include easily accessible and understood real time monitoring/timely reporting such as a daily ozone Index
- EMPACT project criteria include:

    - Meet community needs
    - Time relevant
    - Innovative
    - Easily accessible
    - Sustainable
    - Transferrable
    - Located in one of 86 EMPACT cities
    - Establish effective partnership
    - Effective interpretation and communication .

Key Questions of the Speakers:

Question: How did you overcome the "It's not "representative?"

Answer: People represent themselves, and a representative sample of 25 will give you a sample ± 25%

Question: Did you do an internet survey?
Answer: Yes. Found the public was interested in information pertinent to them. People are not interested globally. For example: a group was in charge of moving feds furniture nationally. The group received feedback about damaged furniture from irate customers so they added a clause to contracts to safeguard legs on furniture during moves.

Question: Did you do a plain language review of your request for applications (RFA)?
Answer: No. This grants process is a very independent process all its own. EMPACT did work with applicants on explanations., and is working on plain language for the tutorial. EMPACT heard that customers need more assistance in interpreting the grant requirements; they were not experienced with the format of the grant process. What we did was to provide additional explanations, highlight information about confusing issues and bring attention to them in the layout of the instructions, develop EMPACT grant tutorials modeled after the EPA Grant writing tutorial that already exists, and conduct small scale surveys to see how we are doing -- how clear our explanations are.

How can EPA use this information?

EPA employees can acquire informal qualitative feedback from customers during their routine work assignments and during things they do in their day-to-day lives. They should remember things that customers say and informally question customers on whether they are satisfied with the work EPA is doing.

Where in EPA can this information be used?

Staff at all levels should learn to recognize feedback opportunities and take advantage of them. EPA can use this information at all work levels, but best among employees who have direct contact with customers. For example, engineers and community relations personnel who visit sites and meet with community leaders, business owners and the general public should always be aware of the comments they hear from the customers. They should pass comments on to managers and make suggestions on what could be done to improve customer satisfaction.

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Talking Point for Joseph Wholey, General Accounting Office, at EPA's 1999 National Conference on Customer Service, November 30 - December 1

Using Qualitative Customer Feedback to Improve Programs

- Background
- Clarifying performance expectations
- Qualitative feedback opportunities
- Using customer feedback to obtain a variety of information
- Using customer feedback to improve our programs

Background

- Comments today represent my own views and do not represent the policy or position of the U.S. General Accounting Office or the University of Southern California.
- Thanks are due to those in Congress, agencies, and the not-for-profit sector, who have brought us to where we are today.

Clarifying Performance Expectations

- <u>We should involve customers in clarifying performance expectations</u>.
- Performance may focus on inputs, process, or outputs (products or services).
- Performance may focus on service quality or outcomes (results).
- Performance may focus on equity, efficiency, or cost-effectiveness.

Qualitative Feedback Opportunities

- <u>Conducting interpretative research: learning what our products and services mean to our customers</u>
- Capitalizing on day-to-day experience: letters, telephone calls, meetings...
- Using interviews and focus groups
- Using <u>small-sample</u> surveys
- Capturing themes <u>and</u> verbatim quotes

Using Customer Feedback to Obtain a Variety of Information

- Ratings of overall satisfaction
- Ratings of specific service characteristics
- <u>Factual information on client experiences and results</u>
- Reasons for dissatisfaction
- Suggestions for improving products and services

Using Customer Feedback to Improve Our Programs

- Redirecting resources or activities to improve program performance
- Redesigning management systems to focus on program performance
- Developing intangible or tangible incentives for better program performance
- Developing performance partnerships

Environmental Monitoring for Public Access and Community Tracking

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

EMPACT Environmental Monitoring for Public Access & Community Tracking

Charlotte A. Cottrill, Ph.D.
EMPACT Program
Office of Technology Operations and Planning
Office of Environmental Information

Key Principles

EMPACT Environmental Monitoring for Public Access & Community Tracking

- Community Partnership / Community-Driven
- Community Ownership of Data
- Real-Time Monitoring / Timely Reporting
  - Easily Accessible & Understood
  - High Quality Information
- Cross-Agency Coordination
- National Framework / Community Implementation

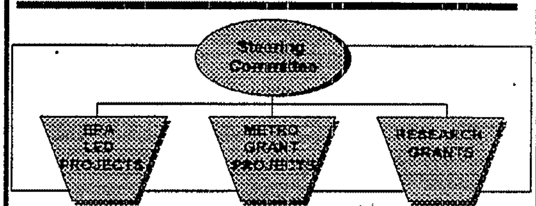
EMPACT Project Criteria

EMPACT Environmental Monitoring for Public Access & Community Tracking

- Meets Community Needs
- Time Relevant
- Innovative
- Easy Access
- Sustainable
- Transferable
- In One of 86 EMPACT Cities
- Establishes Effective Partnerships
- Meets Quality Assurance/Peer Review
- Effective Interpretation and Communication

Organization

EMPACT Environmental Monitoring for Public Access & Community Tracking



EMPACT METRO GRANTS - $3.5M

EMPACT Environmental Monitoring for Public Access & Community Tracking

- Recipients - Local Government
- NSF/NIH Grant Model
- FY'99 Solicitation
  - +75 inquiries

WHAT DID EMPACT HEAR FROM ITS CUSTOMERS?

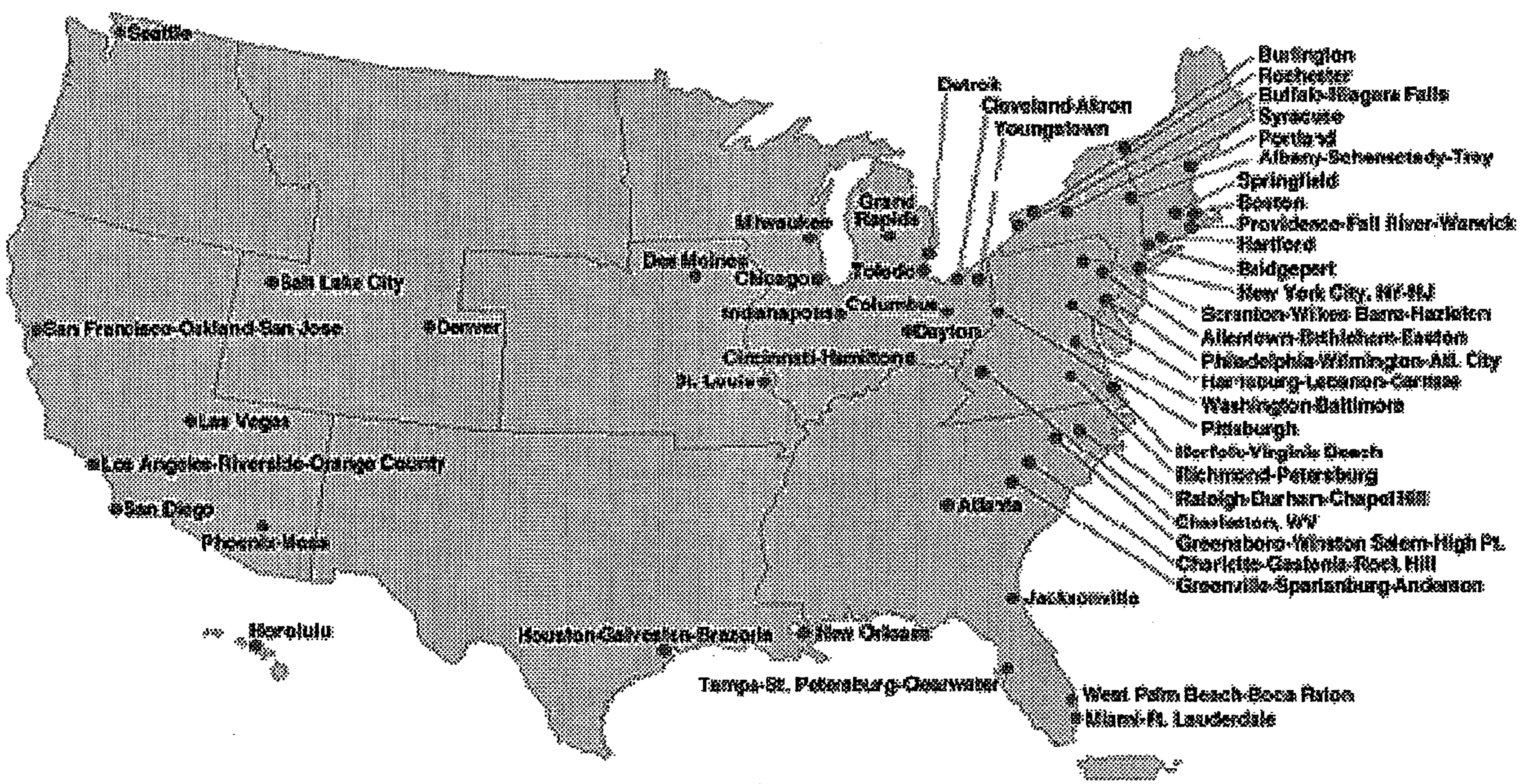
EMPACT Environmental Monitoring for Public Access & Community Tracking

EMPACT customers needed more assistance in interpreting the grant requirements

Where are we working?

EMPACT

Environmental Monitoring for Public Access & Community Tracking



HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN?

EMPACT
Environmental Monitoring for Public Access & Community Tracking

EMPACT customers were not experienced with the format of this grant process

Solution

EMPACT
Environmental Monitoring for Public Access & Community Tracking

Provide additional explanations

- Highlight information about confusing issues
- Develop EMPACT Grant Tutorial Modeled after the EPA Grant-Writing Tutorial

Session Name and Time: Complaints Management -- Effective Telephone System

Featured Speakers: Dan Rumelt, Consumer Product Safety Commission and Kerry Weiss, EPA's Office of Administration & Resources Management (OARM)

Presentation Summary:

Kerry Weiss talked about OARM's study of complaints management systems in other government organizations. The task force learned that world class leaders make complaints an opportunity to improve, that it must be easy for customers to complain and that organizations must respond quickly and courteously. Kerry provided copies of a report on the lessons learned by the task force and summarized them as follow:

- Communicate with staff often and early.
- Design communication pieces to reach the intended audience.
- Staff must understand vision and role of complaints.
- Planning is never done--must design and refine continuously
- Need to include "partnership agreements" between complaint center and organizations that must resolve problems
- Provide staff frequently asked questions lists or data base, and update it often.

Dan Rumelt noted that CSPC is a small agency with a staff of 300 and has jurisdiction over 15,000 products. He discussed how the CPSC deals with complaints, a major responsibility for his agency. The agency provides a toll-free hotline for consumers to complain about products. Their hotline has a staff of ten, costs $500,000 annually to operate, and receives 450,000 inquiries/complaints a year about unsafe products. A problem - many times callers associate them with the company about whose product they are complaining.

Hotline staff capture stories on complaints about products. Many callers call back to find out what action was taken on their complaints. Some complaints will receive closure and action; some won't. The agency can negotiate recalls with companies, but consumers may see the negotiated recall as not favorable to them. CPSC then receives complaints from consumers that the recall is not fair and CPSC may be seen as favoring the regulated industry over the consumers. CPSC is bound by statutory authority.

How does CSPC respond to callers to make them feel delighted? All callers receive a verification notice sent to them within 24 hrs. This note seeks to verify the specifics of their complaint. At this time, CSPC can only do this verification based on calls to the Hotline. CSPC is working on improving the e-mail response time. All complaint data go into a data base. When a matter is resolved, all the people who called about a particular matter are notified.

There is no instant response to e-mail inquires. They take several weeks to verify. All E-mail received is "general" in nature, and is routed to multiple groups in CSPC. A problem is that they don't get enough questions that are similar - each varies somewhat. A person from the Bureau of Census said they are using software packages to help with their customer assistance. Dan Rumelt feels the standard off-the-shelf software packages that the CPSC staff have reviewed won't work for them.

CPSC deals with a large number of complaints on many different products that must be referred to the right place to get action. In addition, not all complaints come in to the hotline. So the task of tracking a complaint for resolution is a major one. Much effort has gone into improving this over the last five years and databases have been developed to help.

Some complaints are about anomalies that customers think are problems. The Commission won't take action on these, but staff captures the information. Consumers won't be satisfied with no agency response.

CPSC receives some complaints about their service. Some calls are because the caller expected notification from the agency on what was done with their complaint. CSPC frequently receives erroneous complaints -- either to wrong agency or for wrong action/information. Much of the CSPC's contact with the public is by phone and surface mail. Due to manpower restraints they can't always send out an investigator to investigate complaints.

CPSC does sampling to determine call hold time and it is almost zero during busy and slower times. They have a standard of 95% of people will be transferred to a representative within 30 seconds. Their service representatives spend more time with calls -- maybe 20 minutes. Their staff uses the Consumer Resource Handbook as a major referral tool.

Some impediments to CPSC's providing good customer service:

1. Statutory limits - have to check with company first before they may respond to a complainant;
2. Politics.
3. Resources - have $50 million budget and took a $1 million hit this budget.
4. No place to refer some complaints because the issues are not designated to specific agencies.
5. Figuring out how to best handle e-mail complaints and get the information into a data base.
6. Capturing all the information that comes into the CPSC -- you can always miss something that is later critical.

Their surveys show 95% customer satisfaction and a high satisfaction with the helpfulness of the Hotline staff. The biggest criticism they receive is that callers don't want to deal with their automated phone system - they want to discuss matters with a person. But, in defense of the automated system, the amount of time spent on the line has dropped considerably since automation. [Note: The automated phone system is used to greet the caller and to help focus the matter they are calling about. Quite often, they do talk with a person to discuss their complaint.]

The CPSC is making improvements:

- Officer of the day who takes responsibility for difficult problems -- carry it through to resolution.
- Web Site to direct consumers to the right place. Because the public thinks in terms of issues and not which federal agency is responsible, CSPC has collaborated with several federal agencies so the hotline staff can refer people who have Internet access to the web site to get information. On the web site is a checklist which helps people find out exactly where to go to get their specific problem resolved. [www.consumer.gov]
- Operator training in knowledge and communicating via e-mail.

Important Ideas from the Discussion: the public doesn't always know which federal agency handles which issues. The multi-federal agency website mentioned above has been well received. Dan said that CPSC has found that people who E-mail them are a new "audience."

There has not been any drop in phone calls. He said that EPA on the other hand has found that E-mails to EPA have resulted in fewer phone calls. CSPC's bulk of customer interface is thru phone calls rather than the web. This could change in the near future.

Key Questions of the Speaker:

Question: What was the #1 issue from the customer survey?
Answer: Callers don't like an automated phone system.

Question: How are callers handled who don't feel they have been helped?
Answer: They have a system to cascade them to the next level of management.

Question: Are really "hot" items keynoted on your web site?
Answer: No. Only matters that have been fully examined and for which a policy has been issued are put on the web site.

Question: How many complaints does it take to trigger an investigation?
Answer: It depends on the hazard presented. It could be just one.

Question: What are skills needed for those who handle phone calls vs. E-mail?
Answer: People skills for the phone. E-mail skills are a bit different since a written response is an actual documented agency response.

Question: Do you use customer surveys to measure customer satisfaction?
Answer: Yes, but the last time it was done was in 1996. CPSC does not have resources to do it more often. It is difficult to measure the call time.

Question: Do you keep records on hold times?
Answer: Yes, do random sampling and standard of 95% of people referred within 30 seconds.

Question: What happens to a consumer who wants complaint follow-up on even though CPSC knows they cannot take any action on it?
Answer: They are sent a form and if they do not choose to provide additional information, the case is closed. If further information is sent, CPSC will address that.

Question: What about the consumer whose complaint is being followed up on but takes more information to resolve?
Answer: CPSC says they will look into the issue to determine if it is a hazard. Consumer will be told the process and time expectations.

Question: How many databases does CPSC have for complaints.
Answer: 4 or 5, but not all complaints come in to the hotline and those require more research to locate information.

How can EPA use this information?

- Share it with the Hotlines Work Group and the Correspondence Work Group reviewing use of and problems with e-mail
- EPA can use the way this system is managed and the databases as low-cost models that are effective in addressing large numbers of complaints that take significant time to resolve.
- The issue of referring callers/complaints to the right place for resolution is also applicable to EPA. We need better follow through to be sure callers get the right agency

and person when we are not the right agency. Where does EPA do such follow -up? Can those who do it share their processes?

- EPA may want to explore the use of an automated Hotline to assist with public inquiries.
- EPA may want to study the concept of joining with other federal agencies on a common web page listing consumer issues.

Where in EPA can this information be used? Customer service centers plus staff and contractors handling Hotlines, Superfund, RCRA, Air Compliance, Drinking Water -- other areas that receive many complaints on specific environmental problems in specific locations. Most offices and regions do not have an organized way to address these complaints..

Any commitments to follow-up action at EPA? None stated

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Presented at EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference, November 30 - December 1, 1999

OARM Complaints Management Project
Lessons Learned

Introduction

In March 1996 the National Performance Review (NPR) published a report entitled "Serving the American Public: Best Practices in Resolving Customer Complaints." This excellent resource provides guidance in an easy-to-use format that can serve as a virtual "cook book" for creating a complaints management process. In addition to an Executive Summary and Overview sections, the report is organized into seven main sections that mirror the President's quality award program criteria. For each of these seven sections, the report provides a concise summary of the "Lessons Learned."

The OARM Complaints Management Workgroup benchmarked four organizations that participated in the NPR study to validate the information in the report and to take advantage of the latest lessons learned. In general the OARM benchmarking did validate the NPR report and also identified a number of additional lessons learned and practices that deserve additional emphasis. This paper presents both the lessons learned from the original NPR report as well as those items the Workgroup, based on its benchmarking, believe should also receive special attention. The NPR items in *italics* were those emphasized by the benchmarked organizations.

Executive Summary

NPR Report

☞ *Make it easy for your customer to complain and your customers will make it easy for you to improve.*

☞ Respond to complaints quickly and courteously with common sense and you will improve customer loyalty.

- ☞ Resolve complaints on the first contact and (1) save money by eliminating unnecessary additional contacts that escalate costs and (2) build customer confidence.
- ☞ *Technology utilization is critical in complaint handling systems.*
- ☞ *Recruit and hire the best for customer service jobs.*

Workgroup Findings

- ✓ Involve unions and conform to PERFORMS policy.
- ✓ Leaders at world-class organizations view customer concerns and complaints as opportunities for improvement, not as problems.
- ✓ Educate employees AND customers about system.
- ✓ A senior leader needs to champion the effort – visible, top management buy-in is critical.
- ✓ You can't over-communicate.
- ✓ What you measure is what you get.

Section 1: Leadership Strategies for Satisfying Customers

NPR Report

- ☞ Satisfying the customer is leadership's top priority.
- ☞ *Leaders at world-class organizations view customer concerns and complaints as opportunities for improvement, not as problems.*
- ☞ *World-class leaders make sure it is easy for customers to complain and just as easy for employees to solve problems.*
- ☞ Effective senior management uses customer feedback for planning and communication with employees.
- ☞ Well managed customer recovery improves the bottom line.

Workgroup Findings

- ✓ A senior leader needs to champion the effort – visible, top management buy-in is critical.
- ✓ Clarify who your customers are.

Section 2: Information and Analysis

NPR Report

- ☞ Observe trends. When corrective actions have been taken, determine whether the volume of complaints is decreasing to assess if products and/or services have improved.

- ☞ *Technology utilization is important in complaint handling systems. A standardized, automated systems approach captures and analyzes root cause data.*

- ☞ *Bring in technology to support change; don't change to support the technology that you bring.*

- ☞ Data must be translated into information and presented to everyone including management in a useable format so that the organization can better align services and products to meet customer expectations.

Workgroup Findings

- ✓ Act on the information collected – don't just collect it and let it set.

- ✓ At first, there may be resistance to collecting the data – later it's valued by managers as an aid to making positive change.

- ✓ If customer calls are logged verbatim, the log will reflect some exaggeration.

- ✓ If possible, link complaint management information systems to other major systems in the organization.

- ✓ Call-in systems using "live" operators are much better than automated menu systems.

- ✓ Other complaint management staff should be able to listen in on calls in the spirit of "pitching in" not monitoring.

- ✓ It's valuable to be able to pull up an on-line record of previous contacts with the customer when speaking with the customer.

- ✓ While some organizations measure "everything," OARM culture would be more supportive of measuring a critical few key indicators (at least initially).

Section 3: Planning

NPR Report

- ☞ *Your mission statement and vision reflect your values. Your environment should support your philosophy.*

- ☞ *You can't over-communicate.*

- ☞ Keep the customers' perspective in your planning process.

Workgroup Findings

- ✓ Need to communicate with the employees and customers early and often.

- ✓ Staff need to understand the organization's vision and the role the complaint system plays.

- ✓ Design communication pieces to reach the intended audience – one size does NOT fit all.
- ✓ Planning is never done – you should continually be updating and refining the plan.

Section 4: Human Resource Development and Management

NPR Report

- ☞ *Use complaint analysis/trends to identify human resource priorities.*
- ☞ *Hire for the future and hire the best.*
- ☞ *Build the customer service position into the organization's career ladder.*
- ☞ *Invest in training to develop the technical skills of front-line workers.*
- ☞ *Invest in training to develop the 'people' skills of front-line workers needed for an effective complaint handling system.*

Workgroup Findings

- ✓ Involve unions and conform to PERFORMS policy.
- ✓ Don't use complaints to "beat up" on employees – reassure employees that this won't happen.
- ✓ Begin communicating with staff prior to implementation.
- ✓ Reward those who excel – be creative and involve peers.
- ✓ Peers can provide training to each other (at least some of it).
- ✓ Hire people with a "heart" for customers.
- ✓ Mentor relationships can be helpful.

Section 5: Customer Focus, Expectations and Satisfaction

NPR Report

- ☞ *Customer education is key to managing customer expectations.*
- ☞ Know how to say no.
- ☞ Exceeding customer expectations for customers who have problems improves loyalty.
- ☞ Make it easy to complain.
- ☞ Understand what customers want.

- ☞ Maintain a one-on-one relationship with customers.

Workgroup Findings

- ✓ If the system will change the way customers have traditionally contacted the organization, explain benefits of system to them prior to implementing.
- ✓ Get back to the customers quickly – even if it's just to acknowledge the complaint and to tell them it is being looked into.
- ✓ Provide multiple means for customers to complain.
- ✓ Even if the problem is not OARM's fault, try to solve it.
- ✓ Answer calls quickly, most customers hang up after about 19 seconds.
- ✓ Even if all of a customer's complaints can't be solved, keeping the customer informed can keep them satisfied – the longer customers wait to hear back from you, the more anxious they get.

Section 6: Complaint Process Management

NPR Report

- ☞ Both customers and employees must understand the complaint process.
- ☞ If the goals for response time are too stringent the quality of the resolutions will be negatively affected.
- ☞ Future directions: Customers' ability to answer their own questions will increase with more information being published on e-mail and telephone systems that facilitate automated account information.
- ☞ Continuous improvement is key to beating the competition.

Workgroup Findings

- ✓ Include "partnership agreements" between the complaint center and organizations that resolve problems and specify response standards.
- ✓ Provide staff a list of answers to frequently asked questions – continually update list.
- ✓ Since "competition isn't a primary concern in the government, the last NPR lesson learned should read "Continuous improvement is key."

Section 7: Business Results

NPR Report

- ☞ Best-in-business companies listen to the voice of the customer and the voice of the employee.

- ☞ *What you measure is what you get.*

- ☞ *Customers who have minor problems that are promptly and effectively handled are more loyal than customers who never have a problem.*

Workgroup Findings

- ✓ The system should have two primary goals: (1) improve operations, and (2) enable employees to do their jobs better.

Summary of presentation at EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference, November 30-December 1, 1999

Session Name: Luncheon Speech - "Focused Service Delights Both Customers and Staff"

Featured Speakers: Professors John Stanton and Richard George of Saint Joseph's University

Presentation Summary:

Using a slide show (following), the speakers gave an energetic presentation of their "Ten Commandments of Customer Service." They emphasized the many similarities between government agencies--which they have recently begun to study, for EPA--and private organizations. For both kinds of organizations, the ability to satisfy or, more importantly, delight external customers begins with the motivation and training of employees.

A shared understanding and acceptance of an agency's mission by all employees, systematically delivered, is a key to an organization's strategy. Resources must be invested in customer service for it to be effective; you can't just add new ways to work and behave to employees' work load and expect significant benefits to customers.

While EPA is apparently doing better than many government agencies, we can't afford to be complacent. Since most dissatisfied customers do not complain, organizations must seek feedback and especially complaints from customers. Complaints must be treated as opportunities to both fix a problem for the complaining customer and to identify ways to improve service delivery for all customers.

Follow-up action: The presentation took the entire luncheon period, and there was no opportunity for the audience to ask questions. Professors Stanton and George are preparing a manuscript for use by attendees and for posting on the Customer Service Program web site. That product will translate their commercially-oriented "Ten Commandments" book into terms more applicable to government agencies. The EPA Customer Service Steering Committee and AA-ship/regional customer service councils can review the manuscript and develop ways to implement the most important ideas. The commandments consist of both strategic and everyday activities, some costing little if anything to implement.

Attendees: Approximately 160 people attended the luncheon.

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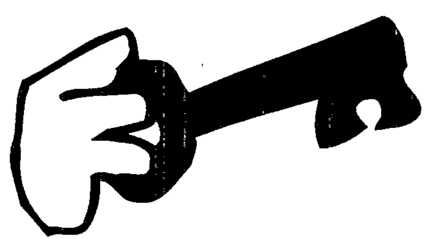

Focusing Service to Delight Customers and Staff

Richard J. George, Ph.D.
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November 30, 1999

Government has already done a lot to improve customer service.

Look at how the recent ASQC ratings for the IRS has improved, and this is characteristic of most of government

Are Your Customers Satisfied?

- **1998 National Average for the Satisfaction Index equals 71% (1995 = 75%)**
- Commercial Banks = 72%
- Restaurants/FF = 66%
- Supermarkets = 74%
- Airlines = 67%
- Automobiles = 79%

Are Your Customers Satisfied?

- Department Stores = 74%
- Telecommunications = 75%
- Apartment Leasing = 69%
- Hotels = 71%
- Hospitals = 67%
- All Government = 62%
- IRS = 54%

To achieve "World Class Customer Service more needs to be done:

You will need to Delight the Customer

STRATEGY & DELIGHT

Customer delight has to be strategically integrated with other EPA objectives, such as creating standards, generating compliance, staying within budget, etc. Customer delight should be the EPA's key operating strategy.

Delighting customers is more than just smiles

- A satisfied customer is one whose issue you have addressed or whose problem you have solved.
- A delighted customer is one for whom you have done the same as above but in a manner that dignified the customer and exceeded expectations.

How do you Delight your customer?

- Exceed their expectations!
- The amazing thing is in many cases it is neither difficult nor expensive to exceed expectations.
  - Return a call promptly
  - Sound as if you the caller is not interrupting you from something important
  - offer electronic filling or applications (and once someone has inputted the data don't keep making them repeat it on each application)

How do your Delight your customer? *(cont.)*

- Develop user friendly web sites that customers can interact with
- Take the time to explain why things are done as they are, not just recite the law
- Don't just transfer to someone not able to answer (and get their voice mail).

Customer service is a race with no finish line!!!

You never really are done, no matter how good you get. Said another way, "You don't have to be sick to feel better."

Background

- Private sector has long focused on customer service.
- Great Service leads to higher profitability through customer retention.
- PLUS it improves morale and increases work force productivity.

No matter whom we speak with everyone thinks that their situations are unique.

Actually, there is much more in common than different between private and public sector as it relates to customer service.

Customer Service issues are similar regardless of the organization

- Private:
  - Answers to Board of Directors
  - Subject to whim of CEO or Wall street
  - Has various types of customers
  - Is held accountable by shareholders/auditors
- Public:
  - Answers to Congress
  - Subject to whim of Director or Administration
  - Has various types of customers
  - Is held accountable by Congress/OMB

EPA has its own constraints

- Budget
- Technique de jour
- Political agendas
- Stakeholder groups

Budget

- This clearly is a major issue in every organization.
- However customer service is a short term cost if properly executed.
  - *Businesses find that when service is good, it frees up budget in other places. Less time spent fixing means more time for more productive activities.*
- For example, helping people properly complete a permit application THE FIRST time means more time to spend elsewhere.

Budget

- So many activities that can significantly improve customer service costs very little.
- Failure to budget for service will lead to disaster.
  - *One supermarket chain asked all the store staff to take customers to aisles when they asked for directions, but they did not increase the labor budget. When shelves did not get stocked the chain dropped the program.*
- Remember what gets rewarded gets done.

Technique de jour

- This is a common problem in every company with which we have worked.
- Every new President or new director wants to make his/her mark on the company.
  - Management by objectives
  - Zero based budgeting
  - Theory X versus Theory Y
  - Team building

Technique de jour

- There is no simple solution to this, but we are all in the same boat.
- However we believe that trying to do the best possible job to make customers satisfied is not just a passing fad or trend or technique.
- It is not a technique of the day, but a *something* for everyday.

Political agendas

- This is obviously related to the previous point, but providing customers, whether they are permit seekers, ordinary citizens or local governments, a satisfying experience is unrelated to any particular agenda.
- Suppose the current theme is "keep America clean" or "use our natural resources wisely" or… everyone still deserves respectfully treatment.
- It may be more difficult for the EPA to switch gears but it should not affect the interactions themselves.

Stakeholder groups

- No company private or public is immune to the constant scrutiny of various groups.
- Why should EPA be any different?

Stakeholder groups

- The advice to EPA is the same as anyone.
  - Understand their objectives
  - Know your own objectives.
  - Develop a system to achieve your objectives, but help stakeholders meet their goals without compromising your own.
  - You can't please everyone, but be careful not to disrespect them because they don't agree with you.

Customer service isn't about just making life better for EPA's clients or customers.

It is about making life better for everyone.

Advantages of Better Customer Service to the EPA

- More public trust and less public frustration
- Greater compliance
- More available resources
- Greater productivity
- Improved staff morale
- Less susceptible to reorganize to reduce staff or responsibilities (look at USPS, US Coast Guard, air traffic controllers)
- Less susceptible to being reorganized under a larger agency

There are common elements to any customer service program regardless of whether it is private sector or public sector; profit or non-profit

Common Elements of Delighting Customers

- It must begin with a clearly written and communicated vision.
- It must reflect real commitment at ALL levels, especially at the top.
- It must take into consideration the needs of all the constituencies.
- It must be systematically delivered and be part of a strategy not just a tactic.
  - must have models
- It must contain measures of accountability.
  - must be reflected in the performance evaluation
- It must be dynamic.

Delighting the Customer service is consistent with EPA goals

- Just look at the EPA Mission:

- **The Mission of the United States Environmental Protection Agency is to protect human health and safeguard the natural environment- air, water, and land- upon which life depends.**

Vision

- One common element to any CS system is that there must be a clear vision that is shared by everyone in the organization.
  - *Everyone in Nordstrom's understands why they are there. Not to sell, but to serve. Sales come from serving well!*
  - *Everyone in Disney knows why they are there. Not to sell but to provide family fun. When families have fun, they return.*

Vision

- The Boy Scouts know they are there to help the scouts grow physically, emotionally and spiritually.
- The Navy knows they are there to support the fleet.
- Does everyone working at or interacting with the EPA know the agency's vision?
- Does everyone understand how delighting the customer can help achieve that vision?

Vision

- Key ingredient to vision is:
  - Everyone knows it
  - Everyone believes it
- What is the vision of EPA and each of its components?
  - **As we achieve our mission of protecting public health and the natural environment, EPA people are customer focused, our products and services are customer driven, and our customers satisfied (delighted?).**

How do each of these components interface to achieve the agency's vision?

This must be more than a paragraph, it must be the driving force of your daily activities.

Commitment

- You cannot have people in EPA who "deal with customers" and those who are too important or too busy.
- Delighting customers internal and external is everyone's business!
- Every employee can see through the rhetoric of how important the customer is if the speech givers do nothing themselves to model customer care.

Commitment

- One lesson learned from every failed customer service case is that unless the top people believe it AND act it, it won't happen.
  - *While AT&T was losing share daily, a top manager told us "I didn't work this hard and get promoted to this level to still have to speak with customers." After losing record sales to upstarts, AT&T managers now have time for customers!*
  - *Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart, one of the most successful and admired businesses in the US, spent time DAILY with consumers and customers.*

Must understand the needs of all the constituencies

- No customer service system can focus on only one constituency.
- While you can't always do everything a customer might request, the individual or organization is still your customer and must be treated with respect.
  - *No profit making company can satisfy the customer without considering the shareholders' interests or the channel of distribution issues.*

Must understand the needs of all the constituencies

- Understanding doesn't mean do whatever they say! *Customers in business would want the company to "give away" product. We say anyone can give away product. It takes brains to sell it."*
- We realize you must have compliance to the EPA rules and regulations. Customer service is not about compliance, it is about how you get people to comply, and how that feel after compliance.

Who are the constituencies and what do they need?

- American people
- Congress
- Business (large or small)
- State EPAs or their equivalent.
- Permit applicants
- Regulated community
- Local governments
- Environmental organizations
- Internal customers

It must be systematically delivered

- Tactical approaches to Customer Service have been shown to be short lived.
  - Asking people to return phone calls, to write readable contracts, or understand the real needs of small businesses will not take place if there is not a total system.
- Customer service excellence must drive the strategy to achieve better compliance and reduce customer and staff frustration. Otherwise it is lip-service.

It must be systematically delivered

- We are not underestimating the importance of returning calls, etc. but we realize it won't last without a strategic commitment.
- We will be providing a manuscript that will detail the specific steps necessary for the system to be both effective and efficient.

The Ten Commandments

1. Decide on your core business and create your vision.
2. Evaluate your competitors.
3. Benchmark everyone- borrow, borrow, borrow.
4. Find out what it takes to delight customers and what do they think of you.
5. Design the system and set the stage.

The Ten Commandments

6. Understand that people do make a difference.
7. Deliver a delightful performance.
8. Work on the next sale.
9. Profit from complaints.
10. Don't become complacent.

Must be accountable

- If the system must collect and integrate customer service performance measures into the formal evaluation system to succeed.
- The system must provide both rewards and recognition for good customer service, and conversely should remediate poor customer service.

Know the overall objectives

- What is the agency attempting to accomplish?
- We know what the regulations say, but what are you really trying to do?
- *Charles Revson, founder of Revlon, said, "In the factories we make cosmetics, but at the counters we sell hope."*

What is your equivalent of hope?

- We asked some people who said:
  - "Leaving future generations a great place to live."
  - "Waking up and not worrying about eating, drinking or breathing."
  - "Feeling secure for my children's health."

Know the Overall Objectives

- For example, if the objective is to have a better/cleaner/safer environment, then
  - Enforcement may become less critical than technical and financial assistance that achieves compliance.
  - Education may reduce to need for penalties.
  - Unless everyone shares the same vision you will need to have an "EPA cop" on every corner.

Needs to be dynamic

- We always say customer service is like a passing parade. Just when you think you have the best seat, the parade passes you by.
- Just when you think you have it figured out, something changes!
- Customers change, expectations change, conditions change, and objectives change. Therefore, your customer service activities must change.

Needs to be dynamic

- This will be a challenge to any organization that is dictated by polices and procedures.
- You can't ever take solace in the fact you have it all figured out. The right way will be ultimately be determined by the factors of the present and the future.
- Policy must change and change fast otherwise you are always behind.

Say "Amen" if You Believe

- Large organizations can change quickly IF they think it is important.
  - *Wal-Mart has over 1 million employees and they can change a policy in a week.*
  - *Their approach is "what is working, what is not, how do we fix it?"*
- Change is a wave on the ocean of time. In the short run it causes confusion and discomfort. In the long run it provides the basis to successfully chart our course.

Focusing Service to Delight Customers and Staff

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November 30, 1999

Summary of panel session during EPA's 1999 National Customer Service Conference November 30 - December 1

Session Name: What's working well with States (Plenary Session)

Featured Speakers:
Marc Coleman, Executive Director, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Don Welsh, Deputy Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
Lance Miller, Director, Division of Watershed Management, NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
Moderator: Richard Farrell, EPA Associate Administrator for Policy and Reinvention

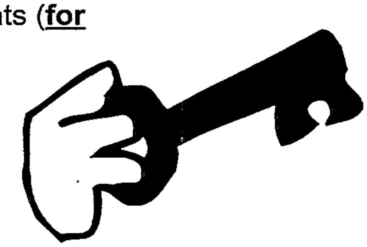
Presentation Summary:
Panel members reviewed their respective agencies' customer service initiatives using a case-study approach. Highlights included (by state):

Oklahoma
- Oklahoma was the first to form a solely customer-focused service group in 1993. The catalyst for building this group? The Oklahoma DEQ was an organization that was steeped in process and bureaucracy and clearly needed to be retooled.
- The DEQ created the customer service group to perform outreach to citizens, businesses, and municipalities.
- They proceeded to rewrite the process of serving their customers, especially in regards to permitting. In doing do, they made rules less specific, less dictatorial, and more flexible.
- They developed new timelines; updated their permitting process; and created a specialized group that dealt with multi-media issues as well.
- They also developed a new and improved complaints system.
- The next step for the State's DEQ is to target their communications to regulated communities. This effort is currently underway.
- To accomplish all this, you need management and agency buy-in towards treating all your customers with respect.

Pennsylvania
– PADEP was once called PADER, and how the name change helped symbolize the agency's complete turnaround and improvement.
– Governor Ridge and Secretary Jim Seif helped to turn things around in the agency-wide improvement initiative, implementing things like:
  - The "money-back" permit application guarantee, ensuring turnaround times for permitting were improved
  - The award-winning newsletter to advertise PADEP's successes
  - Their website, which gets 131,000 hits each day
  - A new and improved environmental compliance system which uses a "Facility Identification Number" to track facilities' compliance, and
  - An aggressive push towards e-commerce, to allow for permitting applications to be completed on the web.

– To accomplish the change, the agency's new management gave people permission to do the right things by opening opportunities to develop new and innovative solutions.

NJ
– Focus on revamping the State's strategic plan, focusing on their constituents (**<u>for presentation details</u>**)



Important Ideas from the Discussion:
– Good customer service is integral to an agency's continued success and credibility.
– Rethinking old, bureaucratic, and/or ineffective processes is needed to effect change.
– Management must support such customer/constituent-oriented initiatives in order to get the entire agency's buy-in.
– Management must give employees permission to develop new ideas, as well as provide opportunities to try new methods.
– Agencies must focus on using the Internet to provide customer service (education, marketing, permitting, etc.) in the next century.

Key Questions of the Speaker: (No questions asked)

How can EPA use this information? As Don Welsh of PADEP advised, agencies should "Benchmark and Borrow" from one another in order to save time and money. This also avoids re-inventing the wheel when it comes to new initiatives. Constant feedback from EPA and the States in forums like this Customer Service Conference are good vehicles for accomplishing this.

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Talking Points For States Panel discussion at EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference November 30 - December 1, 1999

Customer Service at the New Jersey
Department of Environmental Protection
Lance Miller
Director, Division of Watershed Management

NJDEP's Strategic Plan 1998-2001

A. Open and Effective Government Goal: The Department will fulfill its vision and mission and achieve its goals through the involvement of citizens and stakeholders as critical partners and through a commitment to quality principles and methods as a means to continuous improvement of its operations.
B. Key Issues: Constituent Focus: To be an effective organization, it is important for the Department to understand the needs of its constituents and to recognize that the Department's front-line employees are key to constituent partnerships.
C. Milestones and Strategic Actions
   1. Milestone: The Department will improve its performance each year in evaluations based on the Quality New Jersey Achievement Criteria.
   2. Strategic Actions: Constituent Focus – The Department will develop, publish and implement a framework for constituent service and institute a consistent, Department-wide feedback process for constituents to rate the Department's service. Information gained from this feedback process will be used throughout the Department to improve constituent satisfaction over the next four years.

II. Constituent Service Team
A. Comprised of representatives from all major program areas
A. Meets bi-weekly
B. Activities Conducted
   1. Personal surveys conducted in all programs to establish:
      • Who are your internal and external constituents

- What services does your program provide
- How do you think you are doing regarding constituent service
- What methods do you use to measure your effectiveness in constituent service
- How could you improve your constituent service
- Who or what impacts on your ability to improve your constituent service

1. Results varied
2. Prioritized which programs needed or wanted training and are tailoring training to the program's specific needs

D. Next Steps

3. Send out Six Expectations of Constituent Service
4. Constituent Service Team to meet with each program at the Assistant Commissioner level to discuss survey results and offer range of training options

III Constituent Service in Watershed Management

A. Started by asking who is our constituent – wide range of answers
A. Provide Interest Based Negotiations training for all professional staff
B. Set expectations – responding to phone and written inquires
C. Lead by example
D. Results – considerable improvement over the one year period in being responsive to our constituents

IV Conclusion

A. Critical to ask the question – who is your customer?
A. Working with partners requires much greater emphasis on customer satisfaction
B. This isn't easy – staff requires training in new skills and in some cases an attitude adjustment.

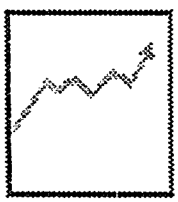
Customer Service at the NJDEP

Lance Miller
Division of Watershed Management
November 30, 1999

NJDEP's Strategic Plan

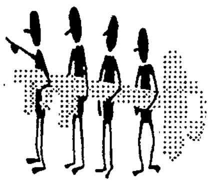
- Open and Effective Government Goal
- Seven categories identified
  - Leadership
  - Strategic Planning
  - Constituent Focus
  - Information and Analysis
  - Human Resource Mgt and Development
  - Process Management
  - Results

Milestones and Strategic Actions



- Milestone: continuous improvement
- Constituent Focus Strategic Actions
  - Develop and implement a framework for constituent service
  - Institute feedback process to rate Department's service

Constituent Service Team



- Reps from all program areas
- Meets bi-weekly
- Activities conducted
  - personal surveys by program
    - who are constituents
    - what services provided
    - rate your level of service
    - methods used
    - how to improve
    - barriers to improving service

Constituent Service Team cont.

- Results of surveys varied by program
- Prioritized which programs needed or wanted training
- Tailoring training to each program's needs
- Next Steps
  - Send out Six Expectations of Constituent Service
  - Meet with each program to discuss results and offer training options

Constituent Service in Watershed Management

- Asked who is our constituent
- Providing Interest Based Negotiations training
- Set expectations - responsive
- Lead by example
- Results - improvements noted by constituents
- Need to develop surveying tools

Conclusion

- Critical to ask the question - Who is your customer?
- Working in partnerships requires greater emphasis on customer satisfaction
- This isn't easy
  - Staff needs training in new skills
  - Attitude adjustment?

Session Name and Time: The Voice of the Customer

Featured Speakers:
Frank L. Davis, Director, Office of Departmental Operations and Coordination, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Gail C. Christopher, Co-Chair, Alliance for Redesigning Government, National Academy of Public Administrators (NAPA)
Pamela Johnson, Deputy Director, National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR)

Moderator: Marylouise Uhlig, Director, Office of Program Management operations, Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances (EPA)

Presentation Summary:

Frank Davis discussed the transformation of HUD which included a 45% reduction of staff and a five fold increase of major programs over a 19 year span; the "taking to heart" the NAPA study which resulted in HUD listening to their customers and setting up structures and staff to insure accurate and timely accessibility to HUD services by those most in need. They listened to all stakeholders, conducted reinvention meetings with OMB, established a group of 100 change agents within HUD to create a new HUD resulting in 50 specific recommendations including store front offices, web page, kiosks, community builders and how to easily access HUD and solve customer problems.

Gail Christopher discussed the need for state and local governments to be more responsive to customers using the concept of performance based organizations with customer service being part of a performance based management system. Shared the development and results of the Washington D.C. Citizen Score Card for/of D.C. which measures six key areas including maximum value for tax dollars, keeping up with technology and transformational areas to serve the customer. More people must buy into the process -- not just the leadership -- to keep the scorecard alive - citizen engagement. She also discussed what government agencies can do to build trust including not just doing more with less, but also better performance by government for the customers (do that and citizens will feel better about government); citizens want to be compared with themselves over time and care about quality of life, not which of the agencies does the work. In summary must build the inner capacity, skill and knowledge to do customer service, to transform from the old to the new, to build customer service within the public sector workforce so they can extend it to the customers.

Pamela Johnson discussed an independent survey of customer satisfaction called the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) started in 1993 concerning the quality of customer service, including service of regulatory agencies such as EPA and the IRS. It involves thirty two agencies with the rollout of results in December 1999. Some preliminary results are positive.

Marylouise Uhlig briefly discussed EPA's ACSI segment, reference librarians as a surrogate for the American public using EPA's web pages, and the agency's plans to maintain information quality, and simplify access and navigation on the Internet.

Important Ideas from the Discussion:

- Must listen to the customer to hear what their needs are not just put forward your own

programs
- Customers want easy access to services and information
- State and local governments must be more responsive to customers through performance based management systems
- Customers must understand and buy into customer based systems and processes
- Agencies must build/rebuild trust with customers
- Customers want better customer service performance, not doing more with less
- Agencies and organizations must build the inner capacity, skill and knowledge to do customer service

Key Questions of the Speakers:
Question: For Mr. Davis - how has the present positive economy help HUD to meet/exceed its goals?
Answer: The economy has had a positive effect on meeting goals, but there are major segments left out of the economic boom so the government trust level is still down.

Question: For Mr. Davis - how did HUD involve its managers in the reinvention effort?
Answer: HUD involved middle managers in the reinvention meetings, listened to the inner voice of middle managers first. Don't be afraid of negative stuff

How can EPA use this information?
Most of the presentations and discussion have broad customer service use and implications

Where in EPA can this information be used? Everywhere

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Speech presented at the Voice of the Customer panel during EPA's 1999 National Customer Service Conference, November 30 - December 1

Frank Davis
Director - Office of Operations and Coordination
Department of Housing & Urban Development

It's a pleasure to join all of you in this conference. "Listening to the voice of the customer" is an important topic – the foundation for all meaningful and valuable customer service improvements.

HUD has done a great deal of listening to our customers. We've made tremendous, fundamental changes as a result; and we've done it very rapidly. I appreciate this opportunity to share our story.

I'll touch on the highlights during this panel. I have also asked the conference planners to provide you with a copy of our most recent progress report, called ***Promises Made, Promises Kept.*** (The report is not included in these proceedings.)

"CUSTOMERS"

I'd like to begin with the words that serve as the title for this workshop: "the voice of the customer." People can spend a lot of time arguing about "who is our customer?" At HUD, we didn't have time to argue about semantics. Congress was saying they wanted to abolish our Department. NAPA was saying, "Give HUD 5 years. If they can't prove themselves in that time, then get rid of them." *[Note: your fellow panelist, Gail Christopher, is from NAPA.]*

Just to survive, we needed to listen as well as we could. We needed to listen to customers, partners, stakeholders, end-users – whatever you want to call them, we needed to listen and learn from the people who have a point of view about HUD's performance. And we did.

LISTENING PROCESS

We started by listening to organizations that had already put their feedback in writing: Our Inspector General, the General Accounting Office, and NAPA. We reviewed every report and every outstanding finding. That comprehensive analysis helped us focus on our worst problems.

The Secretary and HUD's top leadership also met with Congressional leaders, another important customer group. The Secretary also sought out our industry partners.

HUD's mission is to provide a decent, safe, and sanitary home in a suitable living environment for every American. But we don't build housing directly, and we don't renovate neighborhoods directly. We achieve our mission with a very, very wide range of partners –

- The Mortgage Bankers Association, the National Association of Home Builders, the whole real estate and mortgage industry...
- Non-profits that work in community development, in services to the homeless, in housing for the elderly and disabled...
- Public housing agencies...
- Elected officials and administrators at the City, County, and State levels....
- And many others.

The Secretary and HUD's top staff actually went out and held listening sessions with these groups, at both the local and national levels. The Secretary encouraged the groups not to pull any punches, because we needed their candor in order to make sound decisions. Those were often very tough sessions. Our industry partners told us things like:

- We were difficult to deal with, and
- We made them deal with information systems that were like Edward Scissorhands.

Further, we began to encourage the leader of each Field Office to meet regularly with customers and partners on the ground in order to understand HUD's service delivery from the point of view of local clients.

We also opened up routine communications with OMB. We started having regular meetings about our reinvention strategies, plans, and achievements. These meetings let us listen and learn, and they have another benefit as well: through these channels, we can also tell our story to them – which we had not done effectively before.

So our listening process encompassed a very wide range:

- The rule-makers: Congress and OMB,
- The checkers: GAO and HUD's Inspector General,
- HUD's business partners and intermediaries, who are critical to our mission achievement, and
- HUD's customers in each Field Office jurisdiction

HOW WE CHANGED

Even before the listening process was over, we began setting a new course for ourselves. We moved very fast – and that new pace was, in itself, a change.

We still have Field Offices in the same 81 places. That's nearly the only thing that hasn't changed. The changes that we have made are both broad and deep. They have altered virtually every aspect of the Department: our organization, our strategic goals and objectives, our program delivery methods, our information systems, people's job descriptions, our performance appraisal process, our rewards and incentives.

We must have done something right, because NAPA is on our side now. They tell us we have made great strides in transforming ourselves – our organization, our strategic focus and our annual performance plans, our procurement function. They are helping us revamp our resource allocation methods so that we get a tighter match between our staff resources and our priorities.

HUD'S FACE(S) TO THE CUSTOMER

Let me tell you about HUD's new face to our customers. Let's begin with our organization. Our customers told us that connecting with HUD was like entering a maze. So we established a new job, called Community Builders, to serve as our primary face to customers and communities. We have Community Builders in every Field Office. They are generalists whose job is to:

- Serve as HUD's link to customers and communities,
- Assist communities in identifying their needs; and
- Develop action plans that draw on all HUD's programs to meet community needs. The Community Builders also are a resource as communities implement their plans. For example, Community Builders often facilitate interagency and local partnerships to achieve local goals.

We changed our face to the customer in terms of program expertise. We consolidated processing and public trust functions in many fewer locations. As a result, our monitoring and technical assistance is more focused and effective, and our processing is faster and more reliable.

We changed our physical face to the customer. In selected cities, we have moved HUD operations out of the upper floors of buildings and into Storefronts – open, welcoming, sidewalk-level HUD offices where we encourage walk-in customers and community meetings. Eight Storefronts are already up and running, and six more will open .

We changed our technological face to the customer, with our Web page, kiosks, and mapping software.

We have an award-winning Web page with discussion forums, thousands of useful links, reams of valuable information about HUD programs, and even a special area for kids.

We have more than 30 business processes online. For example, people can use our web page to file a complaint of housing discrimination.

We have 90 electronic kiosks that let people find out how to buy a home and even compute the amount of mortgage that they can afford. These kiosks are in our Storefront offices, in libraries, in shopping malls, and in other public places. Several kiosks travel around the country; Community Builders use them at county fairs, at HUD-sponsored forums, and at local and State events.

We have sophisticated mapping software called Community 2020 that you can buy for about $250, or that you can use through the kiosks and the Web page. Individuals, neighborhood groups, cities, and others can use the software to create electronic maps that show where HUD funds have been used in their communities. The maps also have a wealth of other information, so they can be helpful to local groups who want to explore their resources and concerns. Then, we hope they'll work with our Community Builders to develop action plans to achieve their goals.

One of the Department's most important steps was to change our face to the customer in terms of our grant-making process. HUD is the third-largest agency in terms of making grants. We have many competitive grant programs, and each used to operate independently. We would issue separate notices of fund availability. We had different application forms. We used different selection criteria. And none of the timetables were coordinated – even if the fundamental purposes of the grant programs were similar.

It's no surprise that our customers hated it. They don't deal with the world program by program. They use our programs to meet real-world needs.

So we changed. Now, instead of issuing Notices of Funds Availability (or "NOFAs") all through the year, we issue no more than 3 large-scale "Super NOFAs." For each SuperNOFA, we issue a plain-English guide to HUD competitive grants, with a single deadline and one streamlined application form. We also developed uniform funding criteria for these grants.

We also built a Grants Management System so that everyone has current information to keep customers informed about the status of their grants applications.

IMPACT FOR CUSTOMERS

The big beneficiaries are the people that HUD was created to serve. If you are homeless, you now have access to between 20 and 30 thousand more beds in shelters. And, through our Continuum of Care, many of those beds are linked to a broad range of services that can help you move from homelessness to self-sufficiency. The Continuum of Care recently received an Innovations in Government Award from Harvard University.

If you are a first-time homebuyer, you find a wide range of services. You can visit a HUD Storefront to get face-to-face help as you explore your options. You get the benefit of HUD's goals to expand homeownership opportunities in inner cities and in underserved rural areas. Our Homeownership Centers set a goal of serving 1 million homebuyers in FY 99, and they beat the goal by 30 percent. More than half of the total are first-time homebuyers, and many are minorities and women.

If you are a city administrator or a community activist with an interest in neighborhood revitalization, you now have Community Builders all over the country. They can help you develop a strategy to use HUD programs to accomplish your goals. They might point you toward the Officer Next Door program and Teacher Next Door program, which create incentives for police officers and teachers to live in specific areas of cities. Our Neighborhood Networks help to put computer facilities in low-income housing developments so that residents can develop skills for employment. Our HOME program can be used for a wide variety of housing-related initiatives. We have programs to help with economic development, and with removing the blight of brownfields. So if you come to HUD, you'll find we have lots of tools – and a Community Builder to help you understand which tools to use.

If you need public housing, you finally have a better chance of getting off the endless waiting lists. Congress gave us a real vote of confidence when they approved 50,000 new housing assistance vouchers last year, and another 60,000 for FY 2000. This is the first influx of new low-income housing that this country has seen in a decade.

If you live near public housing or HUD-insured housing, you'll be glad to know that we are almost finished the first-ever inspection of every single project in the country – both physical condition and financial condition. We now have skilled staff dedicated to solving the problems of the most troubled housing. We have demolished 30,000 units of the most deplorable public housing, and we are working with localities to build an equal number of rehabbed and new, decent, safe, garden apartments and townhouses for very low-income people. Our drug elimination grants and Operation Safe Home coordinate the law enforcement efforts of Federal, State, and local agencies to drive drugs and crime out of public housing.

If you are a woman, a single head of household with children, or a minority, you can seek housing with more confidence because we have doubled the number of housing discrimination cases where we negotiate a settlement or make a referral to the Department of Justice. We have funded and trained more local agencies to help ward off acts of racial hatred and housing discrimination, and to promote access to fair, open housing opportunities. And if you do believe you have experienced housing discrimination, every person in HUD can accept your claim – not 3 or 4 hundred, as was the case two years ago, but 92 hundred.

CONCLUSION

What HUD has done is a lot like what you might find in church. You've heard of "call and response"? We listened to the voice of customers and we heard the call. And we responded, with commitment and strength. Thank you.

Summary of a speech presented during EPA's 1999 National Customer Service Conference November 30 - December 1

Summary - Opening Remarks
W. Michael McCabe, Acting Deputy Administrator

Presentation Summary:

Initially scheduled as regional administrator to welcome the attendees and open the conference, the new EPA Deputy Administrator Mike McCabe returned from Washington to speak at the event.

He opened his remarks by saying that despite his new schedule as deputy administrator, he "had to be at the customer service conference" to talk for a few minutes about the importance to EPA of customer service. He believes strongly that the American people, who pay our salary and support the environmental laws, deserve great service.

Further, he said that EPA must earn the public's support every day. The long term public health and environmental goals EPA has adopted under the Government Performance and Results Act embody customer service principles and values.

Citing a powerful lesson he learned as a youngster from a favorite uncle who owned a hardware store in the Tennessee town he served as mayor, treating people with common courtesy costs nothing but truly earns loyalty. He emphasized that customer service comes from the heart as an attitude and that it's important to incorporate it into everyday activities at all agency levels.

Making reference to his many years working on Capitol Hill, he told the conferees that effective constituent service -- more so than legislative accomplishments - is what usually gets members of Congress reelected. He urged the group to work with counterparts in other agencies, and to find many opportunities to communicate what we do for customers to continually earn their support and trust.

In closing, he emphasized the value of the annual customer service conference as an opportunity to learn from the best. He pledged to work with Associate Administrator Rick Farrell, the Customer Service Steering Committee, and the agency's senior leadership to build customer service into the agency's planning and performance measures as one of EPA's core values. He especially likes the organizational ties of the customer service program to the office charged with pursuing innovate ways to improve the agency's work.

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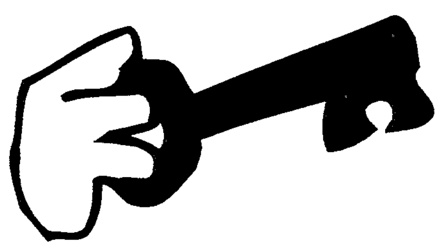

The Importance of Customer Service

W. Michael McCabe
EPA Deputy Administrator (Acting)

Thank you for that nice introduction, Derry, and for the invitations to speak, both as Regional Administrator and now as Deputy Administrator. It is an honor for me to be here in my new capacity and to be back in Philadelphia.

It is important for me to be here today so I can to tell you how important I feel Customer Service is. When my new assignment took me to Headquarters, I said I've got to get back for the Customer Service Conference because I think that it is important that senior leadership show that they are directly involved and that they are directly supportive of the Customer Service Program.

The second reason I had to come back was that as lead EPA Regional Administrator for Customer Service I tried to set a tone and to set priorities which reflected customer service here in the region. I did that not only with my initiatives but with the help and ideas of many people in the Region and at Headquarters. I think that some of those ideas now have been applied more broadly and I am greatly encouraged to see that. Obviously, this annual conference is the time to talk about those ideas, to share them, and to build on the foundation that we have built.

Years before I arrived at EPA, I already knew from my own experience on several congressional staffs that the people who work for EPA are instinctively dedicated to public service. Everything that I saw as regional administrator more than confirmed this, and I suspect that most of you who work for other agencies share this belief. I have no doubt that we come to work every day to serve the American people, the public health and the natural environment.

During the past nearly 30 years, the people of EPA and most of the agencies represented here today have not only cleaned up our air, water and land, but have also contributed to a major transformation of our societal values. Today, protection of human health and the environment is among the priorities that Americans demand and so vigorously defend. I believe strongly that if our important mission is to be fulfilled, and if the public and private resources needed to sustain it are to be invested each year, the American people and their representatives must continue to believe that environmental protection is in good hands at EPA.

We must always remember that our reputation is earned not only by what we do, but also by how we do it. And they won't have confidence in our ability to do the great things we're charged with if we can't be good at the simple, everyday things like answering the mail and phone promptly and responsively.

I'm more convinced than ever that effective relationships with the people we serve, and with those who share our mission, will largely decide the future of our agency. If this isn't a compelling reason for learning new ways to deliver great customer service, I don't know what is.

The third reason, and perhaps the most important reason that I thought it was important to come up here, is because I consider myself a public servant. I have all the time I have been involved in public life, which began 25 years ago working for a U. S. Senator. I think that the number one customer that we serve is the American people. The American people pay our salaries; they support the laws that are the foundation for the public health protection. The American public deserves the best service possible, and we ought to supply it.

Customer service is not just the day-to-day work that we do in the programs at the Environmental Protection Agency. It is not just going out and protecting the environment and public health. It really is serving the American people, and the best way to serve them is through good customer service. That, clearly, is the focus of this conference.

The efforts that are underway are focused on improving service. They have to be spread throughout the Agency. It is something I have talked about -- customer service not being a new initiative, not something mandated by Headquarters or the White House. It really is an attitude, a way of doing business that should be incorporated into everything that we do.

I have a personal experience with this which goes back to my childhood. Even though it doesn't sound like it, my family is from the south. Both parents were born in Tennessee; their parents were born in Tennessee and their parents before them. I had a great-uncle who was from a little town called Huntington, Tennessee – Great-Uncle Bibbie. He owned the local lumber yard and hardware store. For the small town and the county it served, this was a very important position to be in and he always told me that if you treat customers the way that you would want to be treated as a customer that they will keep coming back to you.

I remember sitting at the store on hot summer days, because for some reason the only time that we went down to visit the family was on hot summer days. I would sit in the area where all the customers came in. There was a great big cooler there – one of those old soda pop coolers with the glass bottles in them and the slide-back top. It was a nickel at that time for Dr. Pepper, and my uncle would always ask a customer as he was coming in if he wanted a soda. It was that basic introductory common courtesy that he extended to all individuals that made him a very successful businessman and a very successful politician as well. They elected him Mayor and kept him Mayor for a long time. People just felt that if they could trust him and get the kind of service that they wanted in the hardware store and the lumber yard that they could entrust him with the leadership at the government level too.

I have taken a lot of my clues from my Great-Uncle Bibbie. I think those basic common courtesies are something that we can certainly extend here within our own communications and connections with the public. I know also from my own experience on a congressional staff that despite all the legislative initiatives that congressmen are very proud of, it is the constituent service that keeps getting them elected. If you have poor constituent services, if you don't treat the public right, if you don't answer the public's needs, the folks back home don't feel real comfortable about sending you back to Washington.

I think that it is also important for us to realize that part of our customer service needs to be directed at communications. We need to let the public know what we are doing and why we are doing things. It is not just enough for us to do good acts, to follow the requirements of our programs or the laws. We need to tell the public what we've done, how we have protected public health, how we have protected the environment. It is something that we need to communicate constantly. If we constantly communicate with the public, if we let them know what it is that we are doing and why we are doing it, we build support and we build their trust. If we build their trust, they are going to communicate that to their representatives. Their representatives will continue to support us, and that is very important. It is not only important from a standpoint of our budget and the process that we go through every year, it is also important from a standpoint of the basic environmental laws that enable us to do what we do.

Without public support, those laws can be quickly eroded. We saw that about four years ago when the public came to our aid. The public supported us; the public didn't want the environmental laws to be amended, and today we are lucky to have that strong foundation still in place. The trust and support of the public is something that we have to earn every day. We can't assume that if we do a good act that they will remember it. We have to understand that if we do a good act today that something that is criticized the day after can negate it. The good act will no longer register with the public; that good is the dominant thing we do will be lost. So I think that you have to remember that providing outstanding services is the way of doing business that keeps earning us the public's trust all the time.

That it is important to EPA to provide such service has to be communicated internally and externally and good customer service is something that has to be integrated at every level. As I've said, it is not an add-on, it's not a new initiative, it is what we do every day, it's an attitude.

I want also to note the other agencies who are here. I have been very EPA-centric in my remarks, but I think it is important, and I think that it is a mark of the mutual interests of our federal family, that other Agencies are here not only trying to learn from what our experiences have been but also contributing to our foundation of knowledge and informing us about some of the activities that they are doing. I would encourage that kind of shared information and cooperation. I look forward to working with my counterparts in other federal agencies to see if we can't expand that even further.

I know that yesterday Tom Voltaggio talked about the Region 3 customer priorities and how those have been reaping some tangible results. I think that this approach is something that I want to take to EPA Headquarters and I want to take it there because it has been proven to work. We know it works and I think that it cannot only be used in Headquarters but, as has been shown here, we can share our successes with other regions and other Agencies as well. I also look forward to working with Rick Farrell. Rick's efforts to really inject innovation and to move the innovation agenda forward in EPA Headquarters is something that I fully support and look forward to working on with him.

As we look at customer service, as we look at what we are doing, not only does the American public demand good service and deserve it, common sense and the Agency's prosperity depend on it. Also the requirements of GPRA dovetail very well with customer service. It can help enhance our ability to show that we are in fact performing at the levels of productivity and performance expected by GPRA.

Finally I just like to thank you all for being here and thank you for your commitment to customer service improvement. It does take the commitment of individuals to make something like this work. It takes you being cheerleaders; it takes you being just plain old leaders. In term of making this work with your colleagues, I will be there beside you, I will be backing you and making this work on a national level, at a Headquarters level. If you have ideas, if you want me to promote certain things, please get in contact with me. I will take the banner and I will raise it high and move it ahead.

I look forward to seeing the results of our success and also I want to thank Larry Teller and Pat Bonner for doing such an outstanding job putting this whole thing together. I wish you all good luck in the remaining hours and sessions of the day. I look forward to working with you in this new job and, again, best of luck. Thank you.

Session Summary: Awards and Recognition Panel Discussion

Moderator:

Jim Makris, Director, Chemical Emergency Preparedness & Prevention Office, EPA Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response moderated the panel for this session.

Presentation Summary

Shelley Levitt, of OSWER/CEPPO/Chair of EPA's CS Awards Program, gave a presentation on the EPA-wide awards workgroup. The workgroup is comprised of representatives from 11 AAships and Regions. The goal of the workgroup is to engage all AAships and Regions in encouraging excellence in customer service by implementing a customer service awards program tailored to individual organizations. Under the new PERFORMS appraisal system, there are two types of awards: S and Q. The work group determined, with the help of the Human Resources staff, that an *S award* would be appropriate for recognizing exemplary customer service. The workgroup decided that it would attempt to have every AAship and region institute a monetary award recognizing an employee for outstanding customer service. In June, Tim Fields, OSWER's Assistant Administrator, presented Kathy Barton with the first OSWER $2,500 *Employee of the Year* Award at the annual honor awards ceremony. This was the only monetary award given at the ceremony.

The Awards workgroup has been discussing the idea of a customer service awards workshop to provide assistance in creating an awards program. The goal would be to have as many AAships and regions participate to learn about the various existing awards, help any organization or region in adopting/adapting them, and to brainstorm new ideas.

Peggy Foster, of the EPA Region 6 Customer Service Council, gave a presentation on the *Mystery Customer* Award. This award was designed to recognize staff for updating their voice mail on a daily/weekly basis, and to encourage others to do the same.

Peggy explained that, after numerous complaints about the Region 6 phone system, the Customer Service Council (with the help of the Region's SAAC members)surveyed incoming callers to determine specific problems. The survey indicated that the majority of callers were unhappy with voice mail. Some specific problems identified: Voice Mail messages were too long; no current date given if any at all; couldn't tell if the person was in or not, or the customer did not know who else to call for assistance. Using what the customer asked for, 5 key elements to a good voice mail greeting were identified:

1) Your Name
2) Your Office
3) Current Date (Daily/Weekly)
4) Whether you are in or out of the office
5) An alternate # for the caller if you are not available

The Council decided to take a positive approach and reward staff for doing the right thing. The "Mystery Customer Award" was established for those that updated their voice mail greeting and were lucky enough to be called by the "Mystery Customer". Each winner has their choice of a 16 oz /22 oz beverage mug, or an insulated lunch tote, all proudly displaying the Region 6 Customer Service logo. The Council did a 100% check of voice mail messages in the Region to set a baseline and found that 27% had messages that met all five criteria..

Six months later, after the campaign had been going strong, the Council repeated the survey and found that 57% of the staff had greetings with all 5 elements and 71% of the greeting had 4 of the 5 elements. .Both internal and external customers have commented positively on the new and improved voice mail greetings. They now feel like they are leaving messages with a responsible person and not just an automated nameless voice.

Barry Goldfarb, of the EPA Office of Research & Development, spoke about the Quarterly Customer Service Peer Recognition Nomination Program. That program is based on the question, "In a Diverse Wide-spread Organization, Can You Say Thank You Enough?"

ORMA's Quarterly Customer Service Peer Recognition Nomination Program
Purpose:
- To enable ORMA employees to recognize other employees within the office for delivering quality customer service.
- To encourage ORMA employees to integrate good customer service in all aspects of their work and for them to feel empowered in their role as part of the ORMA Customer Service Team.
- To recognize and reward recipients for a job well done and to increase self esteem and job satisfaction.

Criteria:
- Serve their **external** customers by strengthening public trust in and respect for government by improving the quality of the services we provide.
- Serve their **internal** customers who are EPA employees who ask you for information, services, or materials.

Eligibility:
ORMA employees may nominate any ORMA federal employee, with the exception of their own supervisor or a supervisor within their chain of command.
Process/Responsibilities:
- Each ORMA employee may make only one nomination per fiscal year.
- Nominations for these recognitions are submitted to ORMA's Customer Service workgroup.
- Upon receipt of the nominations, the workgroup will share the nomination(s) with the individual's supervisor.
- Upon the supervisor's concurrence, the employee will receive a non-monetary award recognizing their contribution to customer service(Display Awards).

Current Status:
The awards program has been very well received. An Academy Awards type Ceremony is held as part of a quarterly "all hands" meeting and has left all attendees with a good feeling about customer service.

Betty Winter, of EPA Region 4, discussed the idea of "Using Customer Input in Employee Recognition Programs". The Awards Subgroup of the Customer Service Steering Committee (CSSC) surveyed other federal agencies to find out how they used customer input in recognizing outstanding service providers and then developed an options paper on the methods that could be used best by EPA. The group also looked at practices in private industry and ways to adapt those for use in the public sector (within regulatory and budgetary constraints).

Options for Collecting Customer Input to Performance Awards:
- Database for collecting "ad hoc" unsolicited customer input to use for recognizing employees.
- Partnerships with customer groups (having long-term relations with agency) and get their feedback on people/teams providing great service.

- Mystery Customers – private sector practice could be adapted by management asking repeat customers to serve as "Mystery Customers" for specific period of time
- Comment Cards at time/point of service – one specific question would be "Who has provided excellent service?"
- Customer Certificates – private sector practice used by hotels, in particular, where customers have access to certificates to provide to management for recognizing outstanding service. Supervisors could use these as justification for existing awards.
- Regular Customer Satisfaction Survey Data – awards for teams could be based on improvement in satisfaction rating or routine surveys could request name of employee providing great service.

Linda Hilwig, from the Office of the EPA Administrator (AO), described the importance that the "12 Floor" places on Customer Service. She noted that:

-- The Administrator/Deputy Administrator demonstrated the importance of customer service by establishing the Customer Service Work Group (CSWG) for their office in October 1998. Ray Spears, Deputy Chief of Staff, holds monthly meetings with Staff Office Directors. Agendas include customer service progress reports from each office director.

-- The Deputy Administrator is EPA's member of the President's Management Council. Customer service has been an agenda item at these meetings and the Deputy Administrator discussed EPA involvement in customer service with members of the Council.

-- Both the Administrator and Deputy Administrator have encouraged AAs/RAs to take responsibility for encouraging and promoting customer service within each organization.

-- The Deputy Administrator has encouraged senior managers to approve establishment of Agency-wide honor award for customer service.

Linda stressed the importance of focus on customer service in times of fiscal constraints. With budget restrictions throughout the Agency, it is important to serve customers in an efficient, timely and productive way, and to listen to customers so we *really* hear them.

Customer Service Activities in AO:

AO CSWG has developed a Customer Service Newsletter, which is intended to keep AO employees informed about all customer service initiatives planned and underway in AO. The first edition of "The Key" was distributed in October 1999, with future issues to be produced quarterly. The key is also the symbol chosen as the winner of the AO's customer service logo contest.

Conclusion of recorder::

This Awards and Recognition session provided an opportunity to learn about new approaches to giving recognition to EPA employees within our organizations. Why reinvent the wheel when much of the research has been done by others? This session was certainly time well spent by all who attended and benefitted from it.

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The Awards Group
Shelley Levitt
OSWER/CEPPO/Chair of EPA's CS Awards Program

Introduction/Background:

Last summer EPA's CSSC, which is responsible for shaping/directing EPA's Customer Service Program, asked that I establish and chair an EPA-wide awards workgroup. The workgroup is comprised of representatives from 11 AAships and Regions. The goal of the workgroup is to engage all AAships and Regions in encouraging excellence in customer service by implementing a customer service awards program tailored to individual organizations. We meet routinely to help each other institute various awards programs and brainstorm new ideas and awards.

Employee of the Year Award "S" Award

Last summer only two organizations had monetary awards devoted to exemplary customer service. The workgroup decided that it would attempt to have every Aaship and region institute a monetary award recognizing a CS Employee of the Year. At this point we have 11 or 12??? organizations implementing this award. For example, OSWER has appropriated $2,500 dollars for this award. In June, Tim Fields, OSWER's Assistant Administrator presented Kathy Barton with the first OSWER Employee of the Year Award at our annual honor awards ceremony. This was the only monetary award given at the ceremony.

Agency Honor Award

While the workgroup focused its efforts on establishing organizational cs awards programs throughout headquarters and regions(monetary, such as an "S"award and non-monetary awards- which you'll hear about from my colleagues), we learned there was considerable support for an Agency Honor Award dedicated to customer service. Tim Fields sent a letter co-sponsored by several AAs and RAs to EPA's Awards Board requesting this award be created. We felt by establishing a specific award dedicated to exemplary customer service, we would be underscoring the importance of the link between our mission and our customers.

Change in Culture

One of the most significant changes we noticed this past year is that the awards program is increasing awareness of how valuable customer service excellence is and it has helped to inspire and motivate the workforce.

However, one of the greatest challenges we face is obtaining input and feedback from our external customers. This kind of information is so important that we have a subgroup working on customer generated awards.

You are not Alone:

The success of the awards program has been directly related to the assistance the workgroup provides each other and the rest of the Agency. We worked together to institute various awards within our organizations. Only a few organizations would be enjoying a cs awards programs if we had not worked together. Don't feel you are alone. See me or any of the other Panel members and we'll be glad to help you institute a cs awards program for your organization.

The Awards workgroup has been discussing the idea of a customer service awards workshop to provide assistance to you in creating your own awards program. The goal would be to get as many AAships and regions to learn about the various existing awards, help any organization or region in **adopting/adapting** them, and to brainstorm new ideas.

There is a survey form in your packages to determine your organization's interest in such a workshop. Please complete the form and make sure you turn it in to the courtesy desk before leaving the conference.

Thank you for your time and interest.

Talking Points For Awards Panel discussion at EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference November 30 - December 1, 1999

MYSTERY CUSTOMER AWARD
Peggy Foster EPA Region 6

PURPOSE: To recognize staff for updating their voice mail on a daily/weekly basis, and to encourage others to do the same.

BACKGROUND: After numerous complaints about the Region 6 phone system, the Customer Service Council surveyed incoming callers to determine specific problems. The survey indicated that the majority of our callers were unhappy with voice mail. Some specific problems identified:

Voice Mail messages were too long; no current date given if any at all; couldn't tell if the person was in or not, did not know who else to call for assistance, etc.

A survey was done within the region to determine the validity of the complaints. Only 27% of our staff updated their voice mail greetings.

Using what the customer asked for, we determined there were 5 key elements to a good voice mail greeting:

1) Your Name
2) Your Office
3) Current Date (Daily/Weekly)
4) Whether you are in or out of the office
5) An alternate # for the caller if you are not available

PROCESS:

A decision was made to take a positive approach and reward staff for doing the right thing. We adopted the term "Mystery Customer" and set up a campaign for promoting the criteria for a good voice mail greeting.
E-Mail messages were sent out, posters were printed up, and video monitors flashed the criteria frequently.

We established a "Mystery Customer Award" for those that updated their voice mail greeting and were lucky enough to be called by the "Mystery Customer". Each winner has their choice of a 16 oz /22 oz beverage mug, or an insulated lunch tote, all proudly displaying the Region 6 Customer Service logo.

PROCEDURES: (following)

FOLLOW UP:

A survey was completed 6 months after the campaign had been going strong and the statistics of a good voice mail greeting rose from 27% to 57% of the staff having all 5 elements and 71% of the staff with 4 of the 5.

Another survey 3 months later raised those statistics to 61% having all 5 elements and 77% of the staff with 4 of the 5.

GIVEAWAYS:

Spin A Klip with the 5 key elements of a good voice mail greeting

SUMMARY:

Both internal and external customers have commented positively on our new and improved voice mail greetings. They now feel like they are leaving messages with a responsible person and not just an automated nameless voice.

MYSTERY CUSTOMER PROCEDURES

The Regional Telephone Book was used in providing the list of names and telephone numbers. To ensure recognition for each program area, all names were sorted by Division, grouping the smaller offices into one.

- A Telephone Survey is taken monthly, sometime during the second week of the month.
- Each Member of the Regional Customer Service Council takes a turn in conducting the telephone survey.
- Names are drawn at random and phone calls made until there are 2 winners from each Division.
- A log is kept indicating each person called and the results of each phone call. (Copy Attached)
- Statistics are compiled each month to show the level of participation for each Division. (Copy Attached)
- Each Mystery Customer Winner has their choice of two (2) mugs or an insulated lunch tote.
- The Winners are recognized at the Division's Monday morning staff meeting. They receive their gift and their picture is taken with the Division Director. In addition, the names of all Winners are announced on the TV monitors on all floors.
- In cases where the winner has been previously recognized, they are given an additional gift (for continuing to change their voice mail greeting), but another name is drawn so as to continue to have 10 new winners.

MESSAGE LEFT for WINNERS:

Congratulations! Your voice mail greeting has all 5 of the critical elements which makes you a Mystery Customer Winner for the month of ____________.
Please contact your Division Customer Service Representative to determine where and when to claim your gift.

MESSAGE LEFT for OTHERS:

I'm sorry, but your voice mail greeting did not include (the date, your name, etc.) to make you a Mystery Customer Winner for the month of ______________.
However, if you will include these in future greetings, you could be a winner next month.
Have a nice day!

Talking points for Awards panel discussion at EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference, November 30-December 1, 1999

In a Diverse Widespread Organization, Can You Say Thank You Enough?

Barry Goldfarb
EPA Office of Research & Development

PURPOSE: Pilot ways to enable employees to recognize other employees for delivering quality customer service. Then use pilot experience to promote its use.

CONCEPT: Who can better recognize the delivery of outstanding internal customer service than a fellow employee?

BACKGROUND: To configure a successful program, be it awards or otherwise, requires an understanding of the organization that you are nesting it in. In the case of the ORD, (state Mission, I.D. Customers, note widespread locations and describe a diverse workforce). Thanks to Region 6, a number of Customer Service Award Programs were started and of these, a customer service recognition nomination program appeared most closely to match the initial needs of ORD. The model was modified to become a pilot awards program as follows:

ORMA's Quarterly Customer Service Peer Recognition Nomination Program

Purpose:

- To enable ORMA employees to recognize other employees within ORMA and ORD for delivering quality customer service.
- To encourage ORMA employees to integrate good customer service in all aspects of their work and for them to feel empowered in their role as part of the ORMA Customer Service Team.
- To recognize and reward recipients for a job well done and to increase self esteem and job satisfaction.

Criteria:
• Serve their **external** customers by strengthening public trust in and respect for government by improving the quality of the services we provide.

• Serve their **internal** customers who are EPA employees who ask you for information, services, or materials.
• Exemplify ORMA's principles and the EPA Customer Service Standards in the way they carry out their work.

ORMA's Principles:

1. Get the facts before you assume!

2. Treat others as you would like to be treated.

3. Make everyone in ORMA your #1 customer!

4. Don't criticize! Be supportive!

5. Make a difference! Strive to improve!

Eligibility

ORMA employees may nominate any ORMA or ORD federal employee, with the exception of their own supervisor or a supervisor within their chain of command.

Process/Responsibilities

• Each ORMA employee may make one internal (within ORMA) and one external (within ORD) nomination per fiscal year.

• Nominations for these recognitions are submitted to ORMA's Customer Service workgroup.

• Upon receipt of the nominations, the workgroup will share the nomination(s) with the individual's supervisor.

• Upon the supervisor's concurrence, the employee will receive non-monetary recognition for their contribution to customer service (See Display Recognition Awards).

Current Status

The recognition program has been very well received. An Academy Awards type Ceremony is held as part of a quarterly “all hands” meeting and has left all attendees with a good feeling about customer service.

Talking points for Awards panel discussion at EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference, November 30-December 1, 1999

Office of the Administrator 1999 Activities

Linda S. Hilwig

Importance that 12th floor places on customer service

Administrator/Deputy Administrator demonstrated importance of customer service by establishing CS Work Group for AO in October 1998.

Discussed periodically at Senior Staff Meetings, attended by AAs, DAAs, RAs, DRAs, Staff Office Directors.

Ray Spears, Deputy Chief of Staff, holds monthly meetings with Staff Office Directors. Customer Service is included on the agenda, with updates from each SOD about what they are doing on customer service.

Deputy Administrator is EPA member of President's Management Council. Customer service has been an agenda item at these meetings and the Deputy Administrator discussed EPA involvement in customer service with members of the Council.

Administrator/Deputy Administrator have encouraged AAs/RAs to take responsibility for encouraging and promoting customer service within each organization.

Deputy Administrator has encouraged senior managers to approve establishment of Agency-wide honor award for customer service.

Importance of focus on customer service in times of fiscal constraints

In this time of budget restrictions throughout the Agency, it is important to serve our customers in an efficient, timely and productive way. We must listen to our customers and REALLY hear them.

Customer Service Activities in AO:

AO CSWG has developed a Customer Service Newsletter, which is intended to keep AO employees informed about all customer service initiatives planned and underway in AO. Our first edition of "The Key" was distributed in October 1999, with future issues to be produced quarterly.

Much like others have mentioned, AO has established customer service awards:

"Mystery Caller Award" - - project began in November and will be carried out for 3 months. End result is that all AO employees will upgrade their voice mail messages to meet Agency customer service standards for voice mail.

Quarterly Customer Service Award - - final details to be completed, but hope is to have this "up and running" by January 2000. Quarterly winners will receive time-off award and a pen/pouch set.

"S" Award - - final approval pending. Annual winner will receive monetary award and a clock.

CSWG sponsored "logo contest" for customer service logo to be used in Office of the Administrator. That logo is now used on all customer-service related activities in the Office of the Administrator.

CSWG is finalizing an "AO Orientation Handbook" - - to be provided to all new employees in Office of the Administrator. Handbook includes pictures and bios of all senior managers in AO, and a complete listing of all employees, with telephone numbers and office locations. We are hoping this will be a "customer service, friendly" introduction to the Office of the Administrator and to EPA.

AO recently completed a customer service survey and hope to continue these surveys in the new year.

- Customer Service is not a new way of doing business, nor is it something that will just go away

Customer service by any name is still "customer service".

Talking points for Awards Panel discussion at EPA' Second National Customer Service Conference, November 30-December 1, 1999

Using Customer Input in Employee Recognition Programs
Betty Winter, Region 4

PURPOSE: Pilot ways to get customer feedback for use in recognizing employees who provide outstanding service. Then use pilot experience to promote throughout EPA.

CONCEPT: Who can better judge the quality of the customer service we provide than our Customers???

BACKGROUND: The Awards Subgroup of the Customer Service Steering Committee (CSSC) surveyed other federal agencies to find out how they used customer input in recognizing outstanding service providers and then developed an options paper on the methods that could be used best by EPA. Group also looked at practices in private industry and ways to adapt those for use in the public sector (within regulatory and budgetary constraints).

OPTIONS FOR COLLECTING CUSTOMER INPUT:

- Database for collecting "ad hoc" unsolicited customer input to use for recognizing employees
- Partnerships with customer groups (having long-term relations with agency) and get their feedback on people/teams providing great service
- Mystery Customers – private sector practice could be adapted by management asking repeat customers to serve as "Mystery Customers" for specific period of time
- Comment Cards at time/point of service – one specific question would be "Who has provided excellent service?"
- Customer Certificates – private sector practice used by hotels, in particular, where

customers have access to certificates to provide to management for recognizing outstanding service. Supervisors could use these as justification for existing awards or office/region could set up a specific award .

- Internet Solicitation – periodic surveys on busy web sites
- Regular Customer Satisfaction Survey Data – awards for teams could be based on improvement in satisfaction rating or routine surveys could request name of employee providing great service

OPTIONS FOR USING CUSTOMER INPUT: Receiving a customer comment would not automatically result in a pre-determined award or amount because EPA Award Policy dictates that only supervisors can determine when and what award is appropriate for a specific act.

- Create special awards and criteria for recognizing employees based on customer input
- Use customer input as part of justification for existing awards – organization would provide supervisors with criteria for determining appropriate award
- Use informal recognition – posting letters on prominent bulletin board, recognizing staff at management or all-employee meetings, posting outside cubicle/office. When not using federal funds, non-monetary awards have a $75 per award limitation, but when using other methods to recognize employees.

CURRENT PILOTS:

- Region 6 - Mystery Customer Evaluations – Short survey given to each visitor signing in at reception desk over period of time. Use existing awards to recognize employees.

- Region 4 - Internet Feedback Survey – short survey on heaviest hit web sites Use both informal and existing Awards to recognize employees

- OSWER: Comment Card

- ORD:Solicit nominations from internal customers or Annual Outstanding Support Award – special customer service award

SUMMARY: Awards Subgroup will prepare a fact sheet sharing pilot experiences (with information on issues, concerns, and procedures) so other regions/offices can use this to implement their own customer-nominated/generated awards

Summary of a speech at EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference, November 30 - December 1, 1999

Session Name and Time: The Role of Leadership at SSA (Plenary session)

Featured Speaker: Jack McHale, Deputy Regional Commissioner, Philadelphia Region, Social Security Administration

Presentation Summary:

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has made a lot of progress in customer service during the last 15 years. SSA would like to share its experience with EPA and other federal agencies to benefit other customer service programs. During its customer service program development SSA learned two lessons in leadership:

Lesson 1. To walk the walk, customer service had to be institutionalized by developing Standards Of Excellence (SOE). To be successful the SOEs were focused on the goals and also on the "how to" or the process management. In other words a system was needed as well as standards. These standards are based on customers, people, teamwork, continuous improvement and integrity.

Lesson 2. We needed to stretch our "circle of influence." The SOE approach seemed to be working well in the Philadelphia region, but many of our processes were driven nationally. By expanding our influence, the SSA budget could be tied into SSA's national performance and customer satisfaction. The Government Performance and Results Act and the National Performance Review (NPR) in 1993 (changed later to National Partnership for Reinvention) were a big help to our efforts to expand customer service.

The 5-minute response rate is an example of our customer service standards in action at SSA. In 1993 NPR issued its report with nearly 400 recommendations on ways to make the government work better and cost less. Government agencies were directed to survey their customers, find out what they wanted, set customer service standards and compare their services against the best in business. As a result of surveying the public and asking what was important to them in 800 number service, a major part of our service delivery system, SSA developed the following Customer Service Pledge: "When you call our 800 #, you will get through to it within 5-minutes of your first try."

The initial reaction in field operations was that this was not an achievable goal. However, this is what our customers expected. So, it caused us, as an agency, to rethink our mission. The existing process was not capable of achieving this goal. We didn't have anywhere near the resources needed to make it happen. We needed to train and re-deploy employees who do not routinely answer telephone calls as back-ups during peak calling times to assist our Teleservice Center employees (who are essentially customer service representatives) if we hoped to achieve this goal.

The Commissioner made a commitment to focus the required resources on this important goal, not only committing the extra telephone answerers but also by replacing Teleservice representative losses one for one, even in years when overall hiring ability was very lean. Now, we had alignment of the Agency's stated goal and the commitment of the resources necessary to achieve it.

The 5-minute challenge has been met successfully. DALBAR, INC., a financial services company has recognized SSA, as the best in telephone customer service from a list of nine "world class service" providers -- including Nordstrom. L.L. Bean, Disney and Federal Express, some of the country's most respected companies in the area of customer service.

Today's challenge for leaders in the Philadelphia region of SSA, is to demonstrate another lesson in leadership, that is to "stay the course." Our budget and resources, like yours, are very tight; technology has exploded and our customers expect even more. But, we still promise the same vision for the future and we are committed to the same principles: customers, people, teamwork, continuous improvement and integrity. They remain our beacon, our stability in constantly changing times. In the end, the most important lesson that we learned is that leadership includes keeping your promise to customers.

Questions and Answers:
Question: How was the 5-minute standard selected?
Answer. 5-minutes was selected by a Committee chaired by Senator Porter as a reasonable an outer limit by SSA for a person to be willing to wait on the phone. The Committee and SSA agreed to a goal that 85% of the calls to SSA would be answered within 5-minutes. SSA has made dramatic improvements and the Agency is now up to 83% of the calls from a much lower percentage in the past.

Question: How does SSA safeguard against misrepresentation with Mail?
Answer: To carefully identify call and letters, SSA asks for personal ID information and monitors calls. SSA works with the U.S. Postal Service to reduce mail fraud.

Recorder Name/Telephone Number/Fax/E-mail: George Walker Phone: 202-260-9144 Fax (202) 260-4903 Email: walker.george@epa.gov

Speech given at EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference, November 30-December 1, 1999

The Role Of Customer Service Leadership at the Social Security Administration

Jack McHale
Deputy Regional Commissioner - Philadelphia Region

I. Introduction

Good morning. We've come a long way in the federal community. Only 15 years ago the word "customer" was not in our jargon. And, today, here we are sharing Social Security's story at EPA's "Customer Service" Conference. I hope that our experience will be helpful to you in improving service to EPA's customers. So, who are our customers anyway? In SSA our customers are the:

50 million beneficiaries we make payments to each month
23 5 million taxpayers for whom we post earnings each year
60 million callers who telephone our 800# each year
17 million citizens and non-citizens for whom we process new or replacement SSNs each year
Our customers are all of you!

How did we get from not even using the word "customer" to here? Well, in the Philadelphia region of SSA, we began the journey with a conscious decision to change our culture.

Starting about 15 years ago, we came to the realization, that our beneficiaries and the American taxpayers, in general, were behaving a lot more like consumers when they dealt with us and other government agencies. And, as is typical of consumers, they had very definite expectations for how they wanted to be treated and how they wanted to be served. We recognized we needed to pay a lot more attention to their needs and how we met those needs than we had done in the past.

At the same time, as leaders, we couldn't expect the employees of the Philadelphia region to go the extra step for our customers if we didn't show concern for them as internal customers. We needed a more inclusive relationship with employees. In keeping with the experience of many private sector employers, we saw a need to develop an empowered workforce, a partnership with the union, a more team-based organization that rewarded and recognized collaborative relationships between individuals, work units, and components. And, we had expectations of our own about how we needed to get our work accomplished so as to better serve both the external and internal customers of SSA. Not by manipulating processes and playing numbers games with our goals and objectives as some had done in the past, but by managing and continuously improving our processes in order to achieve customer expectations. Of course, in doing all of this we needed to maintain a high degree of integrity to the program we are entrusted to administer and protect.

So, we as leaders, took time out to develop these principles and to express our values in a statement (our vision statement that you see here) which would become our promise, our beacon as we moved the organization toward the next millennium.

II. Standards of Excellence

A true test of leadership, of course, is "walking the talk." About 5 years into our culture change we had the vision statement and we "talked about" being customer focused, but we hadn't really "institutionalized" this in any way. So, we decided we needed to define exactly what we meant by "outstanding" customer service in the Philadelphia region.

Since we had been successful with the "teamwork" part of our vision, we chartered a team to benchmark other organizations, to listen to customer feedback, and talk to internal customers. The result of this analysis was the development of our regional customer service standards which we called our "Standards of Excellence" or SOES. What these standards did for us was to change the way we measured our success in terms of customer expectations. Now we measured each case against the standard.

If the standard said, "Pay Retirement and Survivor Insurance claims on the first day that payment is due or no more than 14 days after the filing date", then each initial claim was measured against this standard to determine how often we met our customers' expectations and how often we didn't. We actually have 23 similar customer focused targets. On the softer side, we found that customers really appreciate being treated with courtesy.

The standards weren't just focused on the end result but were tied to "how" we achieved success. Our earlier culture was aimed at achieving goals that sometimes caused employees to manipulate data or manipulate the process, if necessary. Success meant "hitting the number", not "satisfying the customer." In this new environment we insisted that the standards be achieved through "process management."

This approach recognizes each employee's and each component's contribution to the overall system that is aimed at satisfying our customers and warns against "sub-optimization" or maximizing one part of the process at the expense of another. After all, the customer really cares about the final outcome, their payment, and not all the individual steps that go into getting that payment to them. Our SOE reports were designed to help manage this way in that they listed individual cases that did not meet the standard so that they could be further analyzed for process improvement opportunities.

III. GPRA

This approach seemed to be working well in the Philadelphia region, but many of our processes were driven nationally. So, the next lesson in leadership we had to learn was that we needed to stretch our "circle of influence" as much as possible.

Our SOEs were established just prior to the passage of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, which, of course, made acceptance of the GPRA easier in that we had already "bought into" customer service standards as a measurement of success. However, the part about tying budget to performance was much harder to implement. What if the current process wasn't capable of achieving the results? We had been extremely careful in writing our SOEs to ensure process capability to any standard that was implemented, but nationally this wasn't being done.

Because of the attention Philadelphia's approach received in SSA (mostly due to our partnering approach with the local union) we were able to have some influence over the measurements in the Agency Strategic Plan so that they were in alignment with our SOE principles. Also, our work in Philadelphia started to have influence nationally; the process management approach started to get attention in the agency as a preferred way of doing business.

IV. 800 # Response Rate Example

Let me give you one example of customer service standards in action at SSA. As you know, in September of 1993, the National Performance Review issued its report with nearly 400 recommendations on ways to make the government work better and cost less. Government agencies were directed to survey their customers, find out what they wanted, set customer service standards and compare their services against the best in business. As a result of surveying the public and asking what was important to them in 800 number service, a major part of our service delivery system, SSA developed the following Customer Service Pledge: "When you call our 800 #, you will get through to it within 5-minutes of your first try."

The initial reaction in field operations was that this was not an achievable goal. The existing process was not capable of achieving this. We didn't have anywhere near the resources needed to make this happen. However, this is what our customers expected. So, it caused us, as an agency, to rethink our mission. We turned our attention to telephone access. We determined that, among other things, we needed to train and re-deploy employees who do not routinely answer telephone calls as back-ups during peak calling times to assist our Teleservice Center employees (who are essentially customer service representatives) if we hoped to achieve this goal. This wasn't an easy task logistically or in terms of morale since these "back-up" employees still had their traditional work to contend with. But, I can tell you today, that we consistently answer 95% of our 800# calls within 5-minutes. The Commissioner made a commitment to focus the required resources on this important goal not only committing the extra telephone answerers but also by replacing teleservice representative losses one for one even in years when our overall hiring ability was very lean. Now, we had alignment of the Agency's stated goal and the commitment of the resources necessary to achieve it.

Because of the agency's leadership commitment to our customers and our pledge to give them the kind of service they expected, we now, consistently, meet the goal. DALBAR, INC., a financial services company has recognized us, as the best in telephone customer service from a list of nine "world class service" providers including Nordstrom. L.L. Bean, Disney and Federal Express, some of the country's most respected companies in the area of customer service.

In Philadelphia we were able to contribute significantly to this national goal because our change in culture over the prior ten years had laid the foundation for true customer focus.

V. Today's Challenge for Me as a Leader

Despite the fact that we have achieved recognition for this accomplishment, there is a cost for this kind of service. While we maximize telephone access, other customer expectations do not diminish. Our challenge as leaders is to maintain our telephone access rate while providing balanced service to all customers.

SSA became an Independent Agency in 1996, when we moved from the Department of Health and Human Services. With this major change, SSA became increasingly more attuned to political leadership. Many of our top positions changed from career employees to political appointees. The Agency, at the national level, became very focused on achievement of the GPRA goals and less focused on how we achieve our goals. With this change, we had to make sure that our local standards aligned with the national goals that we had to meet.

So, today's challenge for leaders in the Philadelphia region of SSA, is to demonstrate another lesson in leadership, that is to "stay the course." We constantly need to re-energize our efforts to influence national agency leadership; the key step here, of course is to continue, to achieve the result the agency is focused on so that we will have the credibility we need to continue to do business the Philadelphia way. And we need to keep the Philadelphia region focused on its Vision so that we don't slip back into achieving numbers at any cost.

How are we doing this? We've created a Regional Strategic Plan which describes how we, in Philadelphia, will achieve the agency goals (and which incorporates our unique culture.) And we constantly reinforce the message of process management through regular communications to local managers and employees.

The work environment has changed a great deal since we authored our first vision statement in 1988. Our top executives are political appointees with limited tenure; our budget and resources, like yours, are very tight; technology has exploded and our customers expect even more. But, we still promise the same vision for the future and we are committed to the same principles, CUSTOMERS, PEOPLE, TEAMWORK, CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND INTEGRITY. They remain our beacon, our stability in constantly changing times.

And, in the end, the most important lesson that we learned is that leadership includes keeping your promise to customers.

Session Name: Shifting a Small Agency's Mission to Embody Customer Service

Featured Speaker: Audrey Borja, Food and Drug Administration

Moderator: Karen Brown, EPA's Office of the Small Business Ombudsman

Presentation Summary:

Customer service is a matter of attitude and is a challenge for a regulatory agency. EPA and FDA are cousins working together. FDA has 9200 employees, 6000 in Headquarters and 3,200 in the field. FDA is concerned with the safety of products, foods and drugs.

FDA's customers are "those who use or are directly affected by FDA's products and services." It is a customer/provider relationship with: voluntary customers, entitled customers, and compelled customers (people who are inspected/regulated).

All FDA Customers are entitled to:

- Fair, courteous and professional treatment
- Information that is accurate and current
- Timely responses to requests
- Reasonable access to appropriate staff
- Confidence that efforts are made to assure that regulated products in the marketplace are in compliance with FDA laws and regulations
- Two-way communication
- Opportunities for collaboration and partnerships
- Participation in the agency's decision-making process
- Consideration of their opinions and concerns by the agency

Other government agencies are entitled to:

- Cooperation from the FDA in maximizing efficient use of resources, eliminating duplication of efforts and carrying out collaborative efforts
- Technical assistance, training and guidance

Regulated industry is entitled to:

- Timely review of product applications
- Professional treatment in resolving disputes
- Fair application of laws and regulations in enforcement activities
- Fair and consistent inspections and product application reviews
- Respect in the agency's performance of duties and responsibilities

FDA has tried to follow the President's directions in his Executive Order about Customer Service (September 11, 1993) and the follow-up memos on Improving Customer Service (March 22, 1995) and Conversations with America (March 3, 1998). When FDA published customer service standards it established Process Attributes and Quality Attributes. Implementing them required a cultural change in FDA.

Process Attributes
* Consistency in policies & procedures
* Convenient feedback mechanisms

Quality Attributes
* Accessibility
* Courteousness

* Frequent communication, follow-up
* Manages resources well
* Problem solving/remove barriers
* Prompt handling of complaints
* Knowledgeable
* Listens well
* Reliability, trustworthiness
* Timeliness

Then GPRA came along in l993, requiring strategic plans, performance plans, annual plans and all having a customer service element. It said you will do performance goals with all three. Teams were formed and public affairs worked with them to achieve the goal of customer service. The General Counsel and mid-level management were difficult to work with, but in a regulatory agency you must include them to succeed.

The agency had to measure the right things. FDA implemented a Compliance Achievement Reporting System (CARS) for inspections. It rewarded inspectors on the number of facilities that were in compliance, not on the number of enforcement cases they took. The result was fewer seizures. A few field inspectors caught on, and then the idea caught on more and more over time. After a while getting compliance was put in their performance appraisals and the field personnel got the message that seizure was not important.

Inspectors used a data base call "CARS" - compliance achievement reporting system, to help track their inspections. CARS significantly reduced the review of the inspections. FDA also leveraged with other agencies to increase compliance. The Public Affairs Office helped convince the doubters by documenting the success and getting the message out inside the agency. FDA recognized the need to document accomplishments to staff. Finally, the FDA Modernization Act was passed and it also helped send a customer message: compliance is the key to achieving the FDA mission -- not enforcement.

The Office of Reinvention convinced major centers to participate in a survey which cost $100,000. The survey went out to four consumer groups (regulatory, health organizations, public, government) to get feedback on FDA operations. FDA made changes based on feedback, and has received over 50 Hammer Awards for improvements made.

Most recently FDA is working on balancing measures. Business results drive budget, customer satisfaction and satisfied employees. Customer service is required to get performance goals met. The Hammer awards represent partnerships with businesses. For example, FDA inspectors, labs, and business have workshops to open up communication. FDA pre-announces inspections, give a report and go over the key points after the inspection. Awards and incentives were given for excellent customer service. FDA believes having standards are important; have people inside and outside the agency look at them and raise their awareness level.

Important Ideas from the Discussion:

- FDA never told the agency there was a problem, just told them there was a needed cultural change. International harmonization was going on.
- Doug Krug (Enlightened Leadership) worked with the FDA staff in a graceful way without devaluing them.
- It is important to deal with low morale and internal customers.
- If there is employee satisfaction, then there is customer satisfaction.
- FDA is moving towards a Performance Based organization, with customer service as one of the mainstays and now part of the culture.
- Employee attitude is the key to mission and service success.

Key Questions of the Speaker:
Question: What has FDA done to streamline/improve drug processing approval?
Answer: Process has been improved through reorganizing into specialty teams

Question: Run into problems with public objecting to quicken review times?
Answer: Yes - have to balance

Question: How did FDA make the paradigm shift from enforcement to compliance?
Answer: Top down approach

How can EPA use this information? Follow the examples of FDA. Start making the paradigm shift - treat our states and regulated community like customers. Reward compliance numbers, not just enforcement. Stress that compliance is the key, not enforcement numbers.

Where in EPA can this information be used?
The information can be used with inspectors and field personnel.

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Presentation at a breakout session during EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference, November 30-December 1, 1999

FDA CUSTOMER SERVICE

Presented at EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference November 30 - December 1, 1999

EO 12862 – September 11, 1993
SETTING CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

March 22, 1995 Presidential Memo IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE

March 3, 1998 Presidential Memo
Conducting "Conversations with America" to Further Improve Customer Service

All FDA Customers are entitled to:

- Fair, courteous and professional treatment;
- Information that is accurate and current;
- Timely responses to requests;
- Reasonable access to appropriate staff;
- Confidence that efforts are made to assure that regulated products in the marketplace are in compliance with FDA laws and regulations;
- Two-way communication;
- Opportunities for collaboration and partnerships;
- Participation in the agency's decision-making process;
- Consideration of their opinions and concerns by the agency.

Other Government Agencies are entitled to:

- Cooperation from the FDA in maximizing efficient use of resources, eliminating duplication of efforts, and carrying out collaborative efforts.

- Technical assistance, training and guidance.

Regulated Industry is entitled to:

- Timely review of product applications;
- Professional treatment in resolving disputes;
- Fair application of laws and regulations in enforcement activities;
- Fair and consistent inspections and product application reviews;
- Respect in the agency's performance of duties and responsibilities.

Who Are Our Customers?

Those who use or are directly affected by our product/service

Customer/Provider Relationships

Based on relationships, customers can be categorized into:

- **Voluntary customers**
- **Entitled customers**
- **Compelled customers**

Expectations Appropriate for Compelled Customers Include:

- **Fairness**
- **Equity**
- **Willingness to listen**
- **Open working relationships**
- **Willingness to solve problems**

Session Name: The customer: What we know, how we know it, what we do about it - a model for customer responsiveness

Featured Speaker: Toni Lenane and Jean Venable, Social Security Administration
Moderator: Michael Binder, EPA Office of the Inspector General

Presentation Summary: - The speakers summarized SSA's Market Measurement Program.

- How SSA's market measurement program gets the right information from right people in the right way.
- How best to obtain stakeholders, customers and workforce opinions and use them to support planning and implement change - what works for SSA.
- Putting the systems in place, creating accountability, making improvements that customers and staff value.

Ms. Lenane gave a history and overview of SSA's Market Measurement Program, their system for collecting and assessing complaints and compliments from SSA's customers. Customers include recipients of OASDI and SSA employees. The system is also known as "TLC" or talking and listening to customers (with tender loving care).

GPRA makes the government responsible for the outcome of our work, in the context of business results and what matters to the public. An Executive Order in 1993 laid out the goal to be as good as business, and what needed to be done. SSA had to learn to listen to customers and do what they needed. This required the agency to set up a complaints system and benchmarks for performance. It also required that employees be satisfied, since there is a correlation between employee satisfaction and satisfying customers. SSA now makes customer service important to their mission. Complaints can be used for making improvements and help an agency do the things they do well.

Ms. Venable explained how the system was developed and is being implemented. SSA is in the third year of the system and 18 months of having it up and running. It is the only system of its kind in the government. To make such a system work, internal support is required. Everyone must be involved from the beginning. They worked with a contractor, tested the prototype, then took the design on the road and got views of the public and employees. They are now doing a pilot and providing their own system support. It is important that employees know that managers can't use such a system against them. Customers and employees must see the agency use the information and fix problems. Evaluation is difficult because it is difficult to give a value to satisfaction. They are also building a data base to compare with GPRA.

Important Ideas from the Discussion:

- Federal government must be involved to solve some U.S. problems.
- People must trust us or the country suffers.
- You have to know who your customers are – In SSA a customer is anyone who is looking for something, some help, or information from them.
- We must be sure that what we think is a problem is a problem for the customer -- before we try to fix something, so evaluation of customer complaints and customer service must be an important part of our mission.
- The link between customers and employees satisfaction is critical.

- We probably don't know what our customers want.
- Complaints that are received directly are the tip of the iceberg.
- A system like SSA's sets an agency up for their critics, but it is the right thing to do.
- Employees have to agree on their mission -- If you ask SSA employees what is their highest priority item, they would say "Get the check to the right person, with the right dollar amount, and on time."
- Top management rarely hears the complaint. Only 5% of complaints reach top management, so this is hard to fix problems starting from the top.
- Systems have to support customer complaints -- Have good voice mail and electronic systems to receive complaints; for example good working 800 telephone numbers; E-Mail systems; on-line / interactive home pages - etc.
- You should encourage and recognize compliments as well as complaints in your systems.
- Do focus groups on big issues every 2-3 years to see if you are getting better or worse.

Key Questions of the Speaker:
Question: How is TLC going over internally?
Answer: Employees were concerned about initial negative press and danger to their jobs and evaluations. Currently in negotiations with union, but employees like being able to fix problems.

Question: Are you getting both complaints and complements in your electronic systems?
Answer: Yes, both and SSA tries to deal with both.

Question: Are employees names entered into the system for complaints?
Answer: They are on the voice mail/interactive home page when made by the customer; but they are not entered into the software system for tracking. Both employees and unions were concerned about this because they thought the information might get misused against the employee.

Question: How do you know if it is working:
Answer: Focus group on major issues every 2-3 years.

How can EPA use this information? Many AA's offices already have systems like this in place. If not, they could start one. EPA might consider setting up some kind of central system to record and evaluate customer complaints and problems. Of course, we can't change regulations in response to complaints, but we can explain regulations. There are also actions we can take to check and ensure, not just enforce, compliance. We can be sure that all our regulations, permits, instructions, policy memos, etc., are written in plain language so that all customers, including internal customers, better understand what we are doing. Such action might improve our public image and, more important, increase public support for the environment.

Where in EPA can this information be used? Everywhere--with internal and external customers, with the public and employees. Anywhere we do not have a complaint tracking system.

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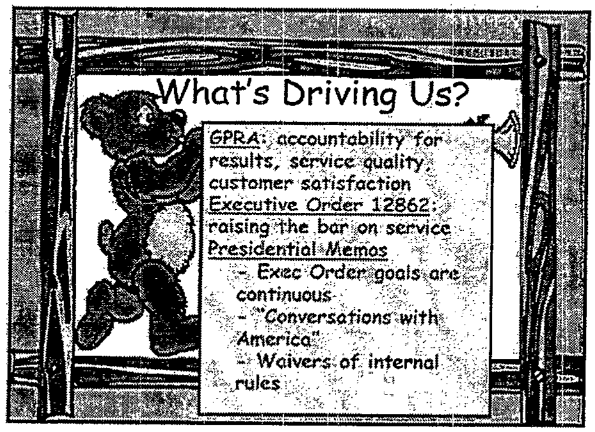
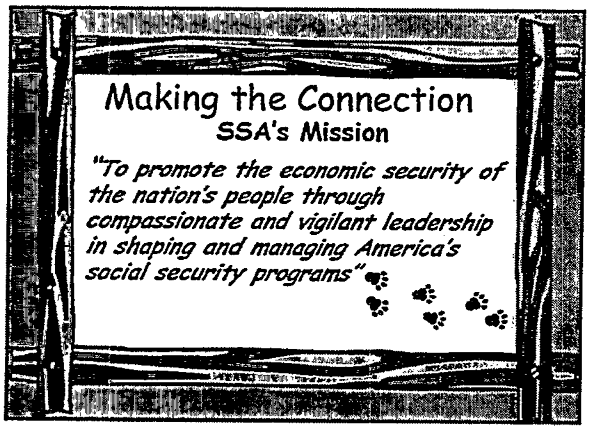
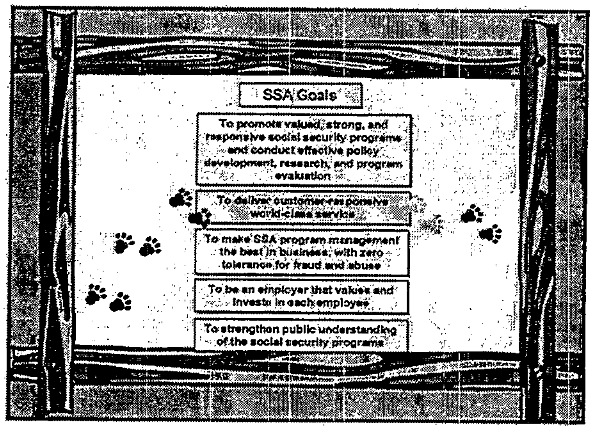
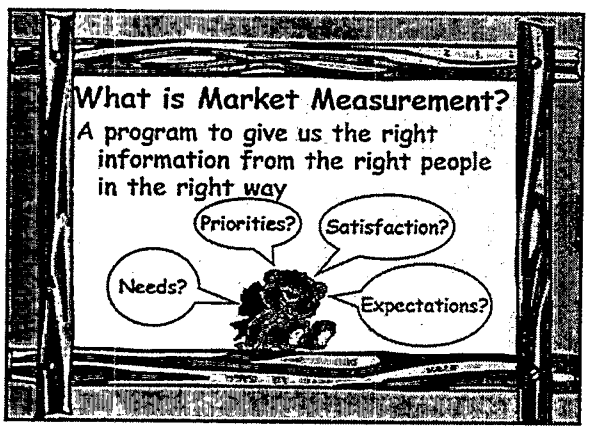
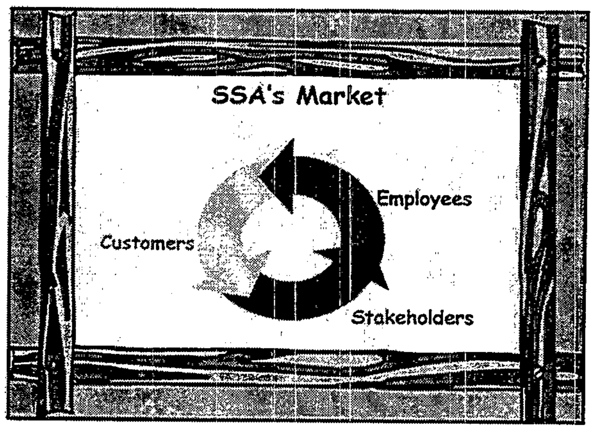
Market Measurement Program
An Overview
SOCIAL SECURITY
USA
ADMINISTRATION

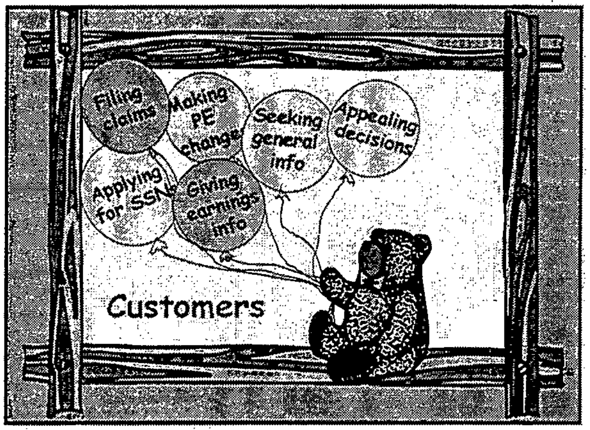

What's Driving Us?
GPRA: accountability for results, service quality, customer satisfaction
Executive Order 12862: raising the bar on service
Presidential Memos
– Exec Order goals are continuous
– "Conversations with America"
– Waivers of internal rules

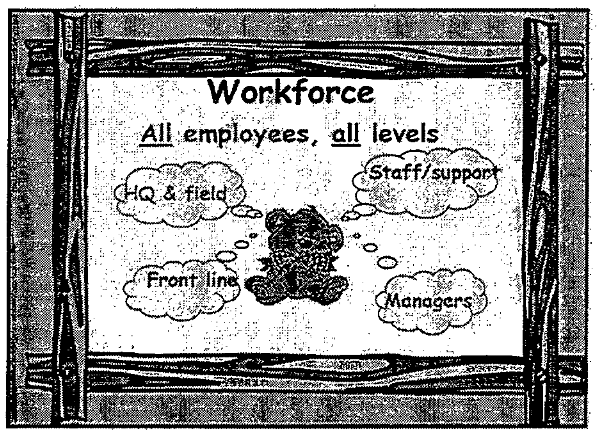

Making the Connection
SSA's Mission
"To promote the economic security of the nation's people through compassionate and vigilant leadership in shaping and managing America's social security programs"

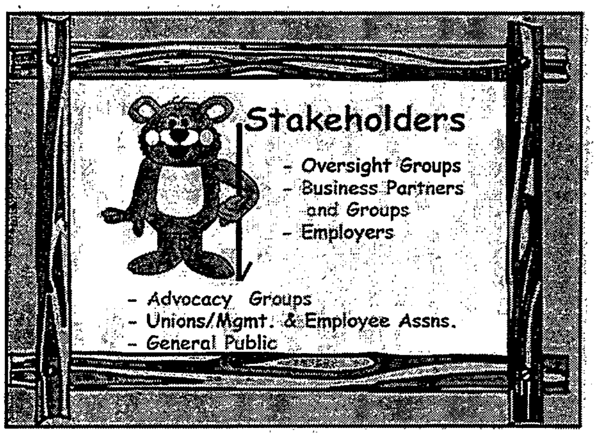

SSA Goals
To promote valued, strong, and responsive social security programs and conduct effective policy development, research, and program evaluation
To deliver customer-responsive world-class service
To make SSA program management the best in business, with zero tolerance for fraud and abuse
To be an employer that values and invests in each employee
To strengthen public understanding of the social security programs

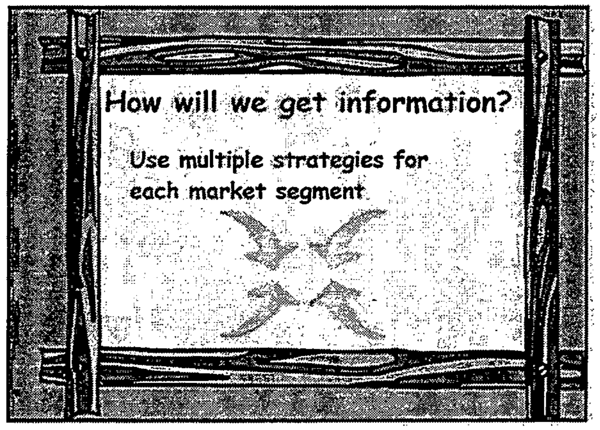

What is Market Measurement?
A program to give us the right information from the right people in the right way
Priorities?
Satisfaction?
Needs?
Expectations?


SSA's Market
Employees
Customers
Stakeholders

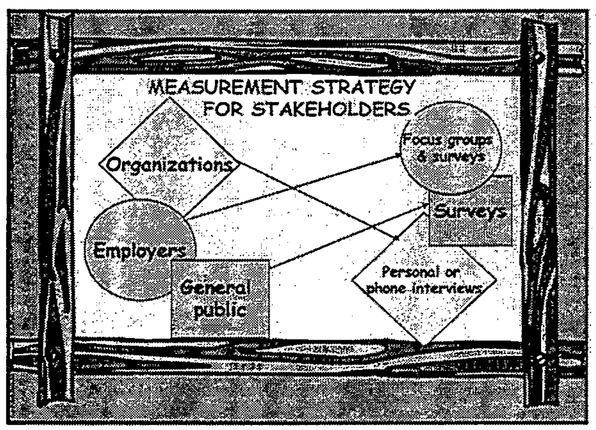

Filing claims
Making PE change
Seeking general info
Appealing decisions
Applying for SSNs
Giving earnings info
Customers

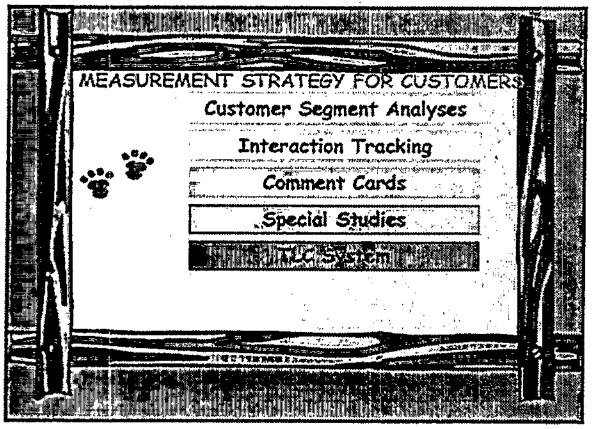

Workforce
All employees, all levels
HQ & field
Staff/support
Front line
Managers

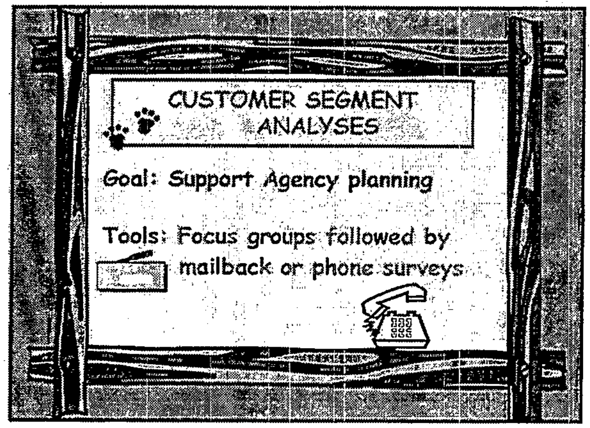

Stakeholders
- Oversight Groups
- Business Partners and Groups
- Employers
- Advocacy Groups
- Unions/Mgmt. & Employee Assns.
- General Public

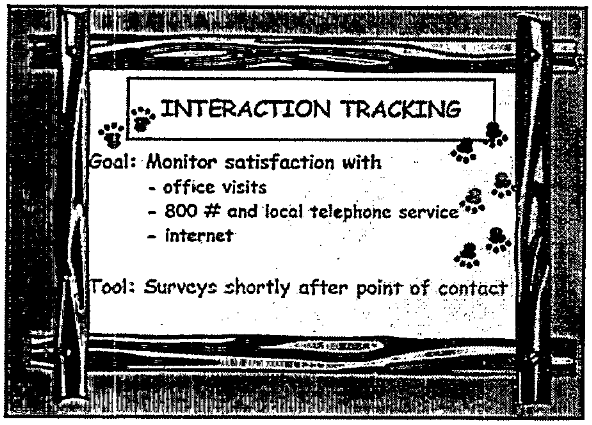

How will we get information?
Use multiple strategies for each market segment

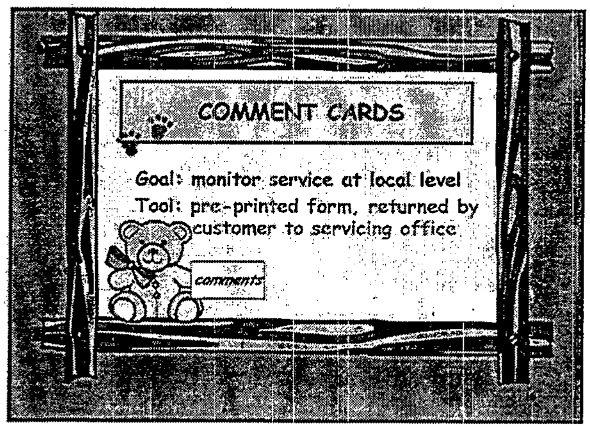

MEASUREMENT STRATEGY FOR WORKFORCE
Goal: Get employee opinions so we can:
- enhance work environment
- improve customer service
Tool: Survey and action plans to make changes

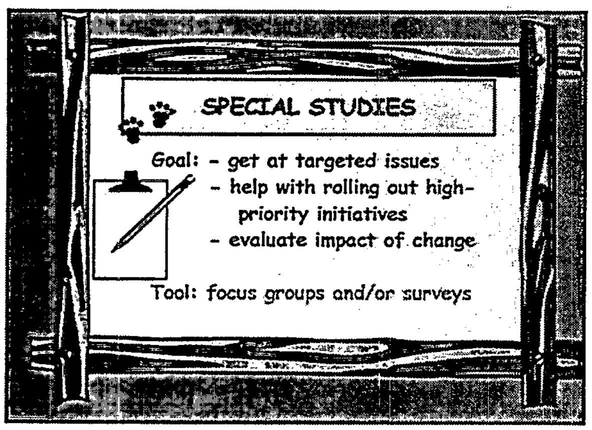

MEASUREMENT STRATEGY FOR STAKEHOLDERS
Organizations
Focus groups & surveys
Surveys
Employers
General public
Personal or phone interviews


MEASUREMENT STRATEGY FOR CUSTOMERS
Customer Segment Analyses
Interaction Tracking
Comment Cards
Special Studies
TLC System

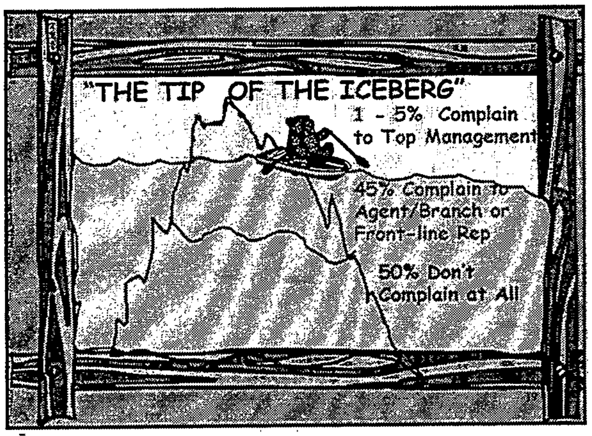

CUSTOMER SEGMENT ANALYSES
Goal: Support Agency planning
Tools: Focus groups followed by mailback or phone surveys

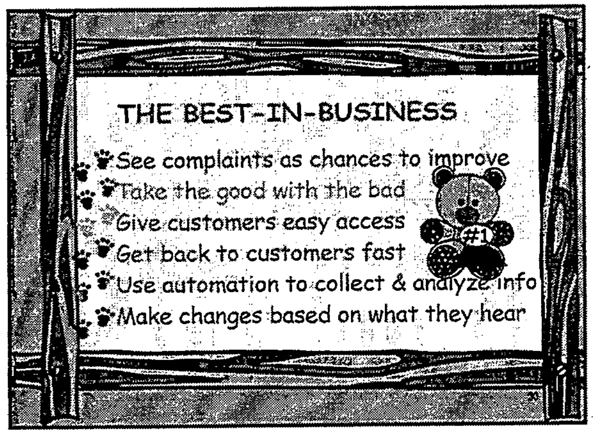

INTERACTION TRACKING
Goal: Monitor satisfaction with
- office visits
- 800 # and local telephone service
- internet
Tool: Surveys shortly after point of contact

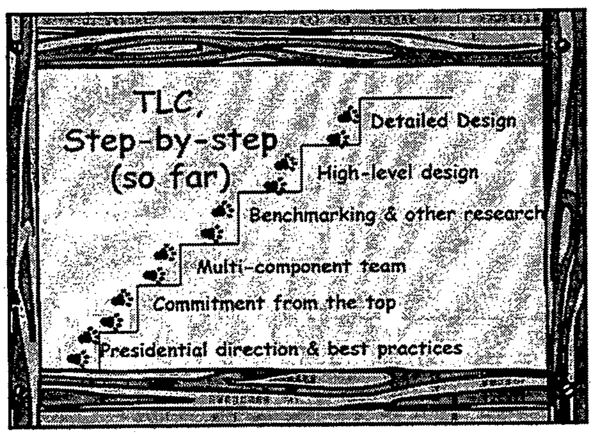

COMMENT CARDS
Goal: monitor service at local level
Tool: pre-printed form, returned by customer to servicing office
comments

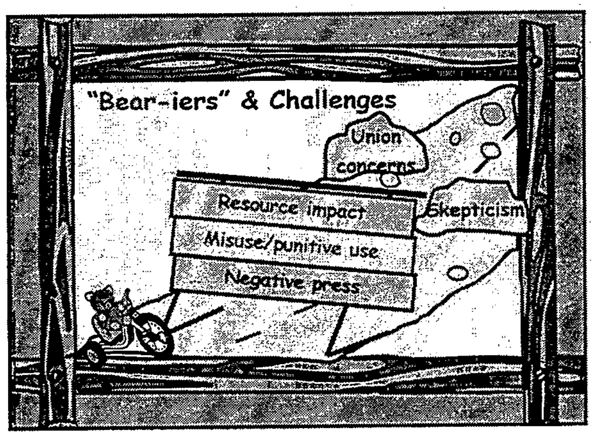

SPECIAL STUDIES
Goal: - get at targeted issues
- help with rolling out high-priority initiatives
- evaluate impact of change
Tool: focus groups and/or surveys

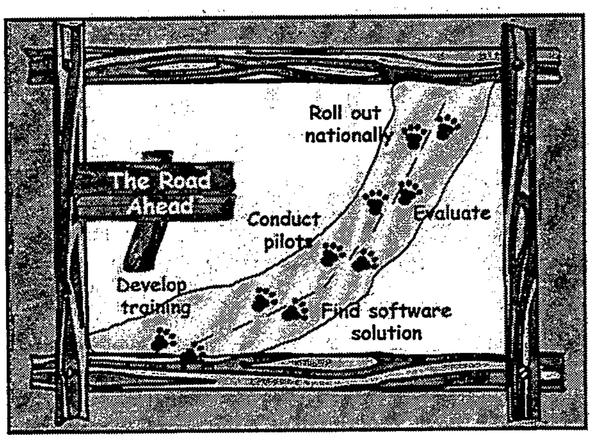

TLC SYSTEM
Goal: Capture, analyze and address customer complaints & compliments
Tool: Agency-wide automated system
TLC

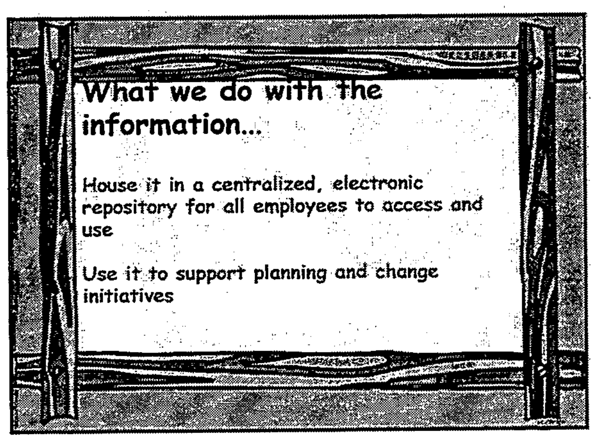

"THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG"
1 - 5% Complain to Top Management
45% Complain to Agent/Branch or Front-line Rep
50% Don't Complain at All

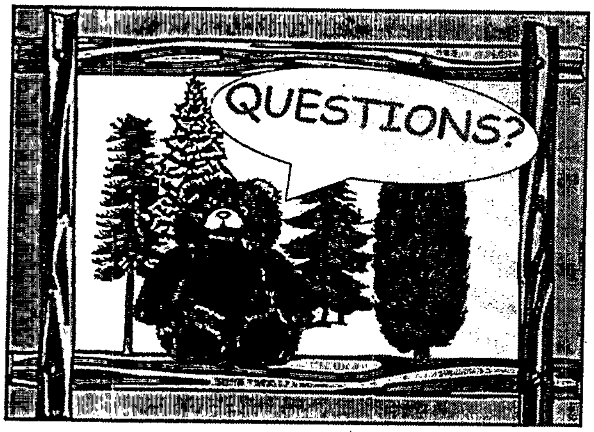

THE BEST-IN-BUSINESS
See complaints as chances to improve
Take the good with the bad
Give customers easy access
Get back to customers fast
Use automation to collect & analyze info
Make changes based on what they hear
#1

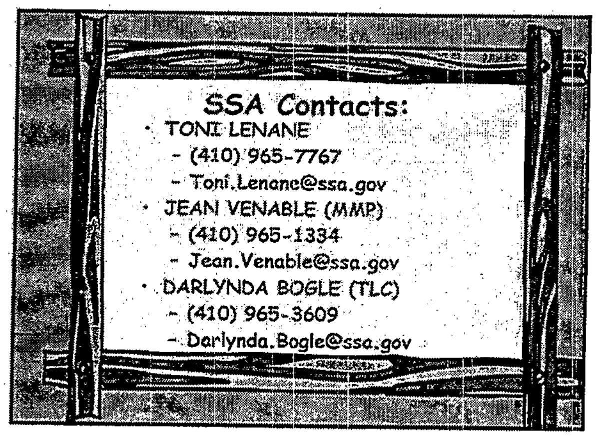

TLC, Step-by-step (so far)
Detailed Design
High-level design
Benchmarking & other research
Multi-component team
Commitment from the top
Presidential direction & best practices


"Bear-iers" & Challenges
Union concerns
Resource impact
Skepticism
Misuse/punitive use
Negative press


The Road Ahead
Roll out nationally
Evaluate
Conduct pilots
Develop training
Find software solution


What we do with the information...
House it in a centralized, electronic repository for all employees to access and use
Use it to support planning and change initiatives


QUESTIONS?


SSA Contacts:
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• JEAN VENABLE (MMP)
– (410) 965-1334
– Jean.Venable@ssa.gov
• DARLYNDA BOGLE (TLC)
– (410) 965-3609
– Darlynda.Bogle@ssa.gov

Session Name and Time: Using the Electronic Media

Featured Speaker: John C. Kavaliunas, Chief of Marketing Services Office, U.S. Census Bureau
Moderator: George Walker, Deputy Director, EPA Customer Service Program

Presentation Summary:

The speaker said that the Census Bureau is a sophisticated collector and provider of information. They have a great deal of experience in conducting surveys and in creating products showing the results of the surveys in ways that are useful to various customer segments. These remarks, derived from a presentation entitled, "Communicating with Census Bureau Customers," provided an overview of responding to the following questions:

1. Who are the external customers of the Census Bureau? Policy Makers, Federal Agencies, Data Users such as financial institutions, Repackagers/Resellers of census data and Respondents to surveys, i.e., the general public.
2. How does the Census Bureau communicate with Customers? Via information in print including newsletters and a catalogue, their Web Site, Stakeholder/Advisory Committees, at conferences with more than 300 exhibits per year for their data users and via Customer Research).
3. Why does the Census Bureau undertakes Customer Research Surveys? To seek out how customers use their products, measure satisfaction with particular products, and learn about behaviors, trends and preferences.
4. How does the Census Bureau use two new E-Applications? These are E-Commerce and E-Mail Routing and Management Software. The E-Commerce is for sales on-line to the public. A contractor handles the credit cards transactions and related security. E-mail software routes, monitors and tracks incoming Internet messages through 12 major mailboxes. Each order is automatically assigned a tracking number. With the management software, a Bureau monitor can, for instance, go into the system and see how long it took to respond to inquires.

Important Ideas from the Discussion:

- Before collecting any information in any form — Understand how you are going to use it.
- Their data users/customers are characterized as "Manipulators, Integrators, Profilers or Surfers," each with a separate profile of needs and preferences. The Bureau's surveys have informed them on: (1) how these different customers use the information, (2) how satisfied the customers are with the info/format provided, and (3) how important certain types of information are to groups of customers.
- The Bureau has used all survey techniques: standard questionnaire, the Internet, email, telephone, focus groups and combinations of these techniques, depending on the type of customer. Related pointers based on their experience:
  - Census had some bad experience using E-mail as a survey pathway. When their unsolicited E-mail survey arrived, it was generally considered as SPAMing and was deleted. Advising potential respondents that a survey is forthcoming ("you will receive a call") and following up with non-respondents often does enable you to get 10-20% more respondents.
  - If you are going to use an Internet survey on one of your Web pages, make sure you use a button to ask the users if they wish to participate.
  - Scripted telephone surveys were considered difficult to use since many telephone users screen out calls from telemarketers, etc., without answering the phone.

- They have learned to carefully monitor trends. As a result, they have found that their Internet usage is up and one out of five of these users purchases products.
- On Media preferences, while 90% of their customers access the Web, 50% still wants printed products. Only 5% want the information on CD Rom.
- In response to customer feedback, they have enhanced their software to include having it prepared in an Adobe Acrobat format, cited Internet reference links in all products, expedited product order fulfillment and developed new products and services.

- Using E-Commerce they have found that 45% of their orders are placed after normal business hours. As a result they have had to shorten their turn-around-time from three days to 24 hours.
- Potential products and Internet page design are improved by being run through a "lab" with students to critique them. What looks better to the eye may not be the easiest arrangement for accessing needed data.
- They have found that communicating the results of their research to staff is very important and they do this through distribution of paper summaries, e-mail messages, Internet postings and holding Auditorium presentations about research findings, new products and customer feedback.
- They also conduct a customer services week which includes presentations, games, videos, customer carnival competitions and customer service awards.
- See their web page at www.census.gov

Key Questions of the Speaker:
Question: When will the 2000 Census be conducted?
Answer: March 28 & 29. 2000.

Question: How can you respond?
Answer: By mail, telephone or via the Internet.

Question: With a recent response rate of 61%, what is being done to increase the response rate?
Answer: A targeted professional advertising program costing $160 Million (specifically appropriated funds) has been developed to reach out to low responders noting the importance of responding and the value to each individual that it represents.

Question: Tell us about the advertising you do. Is it paid for or under the category of public service announcements?
Answer: The funding is used for paid advertizing, because public service announcements were not reaching the individuals who need to know about the importance of completing a census form. The ads are targeted more to new immigrants who don't speak English and to African-American males from 18-24, both underrepresented groups.

How can EPA use this information? To learn from the experiences of other agencies' successes and mistakes.

Where in EPA can this information be used? Anywhere in EPA when considering conducting surveys.

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Session Name: Government-wide survey and more - taking action:

Featured Speakers: Heather Case and Lee Ellis

Presentation Summary:

During the summer of 1999, EPA participated in a government-wide survey with 29 other federal government organizations to set a baseline for the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). The President's Management Council sponsored the surveys. EPA selected Reference Librarians Using Internet as its surrogate customer segment for the American public using Internet to fill environmental information needs. Libraries provide direct, unbiased service to a broad spectrum of the American people across the country and are available to individuals regardless of age, social status, or educational background. In 1996 public library reference requests were 284,513,000 or 1.1/ person. Internet information represents all EPA programs, and increased public access is a strategic goal of EPA. Today, half of the public has access to computers for personal use; less than 5 years ago 30% did, so it is clear that Internet will be the preferred way to obtain information in the future.

CEIS piggy-backed a series of questions onto the overall survey focusing on specific types of information that the librarians might have attempted to locate on Internet. (See the speaker's slide presentation on the following pages.) CEIS participated in the ACSI to use the results to:

* examine whether information products (e.g. CEIS web site) contained customer's high interest questions
* determine which topics to emphasize or de-empathized on a site;
* compare surveys that measure interest in environmental topics:
* set a baseline of interest and satisfaction with information provided on the Internet:
* generate hypothesis for continued study of customer needs satisfaction, and behavior.

Survey Results Summary:

- more than 50% of the librarians had sought information on hazardous waste, air pollution, drinking water safety, water pollution, and endangered species
- less than a third had sought information on health statistics or secondhand smoke
- approximately 20% librarians were dissatisfied with the information they had obtained on industrial compliance or health statistics
- only 10% or less indicated they were dissatisfied with information on the other topics
- approximately 10% of librarians were unable to find information on health statistics

Building Websites

Lee Ellis is active with the Agency's Web Work Group, is responsible for her organization's web site, and involved in EPA's home page redesign. Lee's comments and suggestions:

- Check who has looked at EPA's web sites
- If you are designing a web site, ask questions. It is human nature to answer questions, so ask your users questions to find out what they want, and use that information
- EPA is redesigning its web page so it will:
  - be similar to yahoo
  - compartmentalize
  - do zip code searches
  - be more specific when directing people to go to another site (Lee said that the Office of the General Counsel has been quick to let us know that we need to post a purpose statement along with our mission statement.)
  - easier to use

- Tailoring information to appeal to people is very tricky. EPA does some tailoring of the information to appeal to people. Program offices are responsible for the information and the directors accept that responsible when they sign off on it.
- Add information that people need which has been determined from surveys (One example: Someone submitted a question about bottled water and she received a response within 5 days and it gave a name and the number of a person who they could contact.)
- Rather than sitting back we need to get the facts about what people want and answer them.
- Develop new methods for varying the information on the web.
- Raise the number of customers by giving out more access information (market/outreach)

Important Ideas from the Discussion:

- EPA should provide links to other sites on our main page.
- It is important to do performance testing vs. preference testing on web site. (to figure out what our users need/use than their aesthetic preferences)
- Data from this and other surveys will help us to improve our web site and make it more user friendly
- Make sure the types of data users want are accessible
- Make sure our data are accurate and easy to get to
- Use the information to build better products
- EPA can provide summary information on other links – web masters should put in sign that says "exiting EPA", cite where we got information – so if anyone wants more they will know where to go
- Need to continue to improve web site navigation and respond to requests in timely manner
- 80% of users said they would will use the site again
- Survey says long time customers are less satisfied then new users. Need to poll long term users more and learn their likes/dislikes, learn what makes the site the most useful and build that into the site. (They probably want more information and more updates -- Web masters recognize that sites are not updated as as frequently as they should be -- but EPA should not operate on these assumptions)
- Need to coordinate with local information providers – librarians, teachers, local officials, etc. to make sure they know where to get information.
- We need to set standards on site layout and design.
- We can use search engines and magazines link to us from their web sites to help publicize our sites.
- Need content driven sites, web portals - use catch phrases (IE. Yahoo.com), search tools, sites for customer segments, guidance and policies online, tools for managing sites, geographic information; data gap fixes and data quality improvements,); listen to customers!
- de-bureaucratize sites -- remove organizational labels EPA should raise awareness about the EPA online information service

Key Questions of the Speakers:

Question: Why did the contractors for the ACSI let us pick our own questions?
Answer: They didn't -- we picked our own topics and were provided with general questions that everyone used. Of course, we modified them slightly to meet our needs.

Question: Did every librarian participate?
Answer: They were screened by how often they used EPA web site. Also, these are very preliminary results – at this time.

- Had to make about 1200 calls to find 254 librarians who used web.
- Shows that EPA needs to advertise web more -- need more outreach

- Very low % of librarians were not able to find the information they were looking for–that's pretty good news.

Questions/Suggestions: Don't show that links are "links"-- might upset people. (Note: This goes against EPA web protocols.) EPA needs to communicate and share what the agency does – to let people know about and make information more accessible.

Question: How does EPA deal with the comments received on the web?
Answer: Web masters/page owners respond or refer the comments/questions, but tracking is not consistent. EPA needs to develop lotus notes database that will take in comments from the web and categorize them. The comments then would be collected by an editor who would forward them to an expert in the field to respond. The expert could either send the response back to the editor or directly to the customer. All responses should be recorded and maintained in the database with extensive search capabilities.

Question: Ten percent could not find health statistics so do you have information on - librarians?
Answer: It may have something to do with their idea of what heath statistics are.

Question: People are typing in lots of questions the Internet - do EPA's librarians know where and how to find the answers?
Answer: EPA's Internet librarians are experienced, use sophisticated methods to locate information on EPA's site, and can do good internal referrals.

Questions/Suggestions: Don't show that links are "links"-- might upset people. (Note: This goes against EPA web protocols.) EPA needs to communicate and share what the agency does – to let people know about and make information more accessible.

Comments: The EPA web site contains information that is of pretty high interest to customers – perhaps we need to provide links to other sites that will give more information on topics of high interest (like health statistics and endangered species) that are not the focus of EPA's work.
It may be that people are reading so much in the media about second hand smoke, a topic of low interest in the CEIS survey, that they think they don't need that information from EPA's web site.

Where in EPA can this information be used? This information will be used primarily by EPA's Office of Environmental Information. However, anyone responsible for designing or maintaining a web site could benefit from the results of the survey.

Any commitments to follow-up action at EPA: EPA will use the results of the survey to improve its web site.

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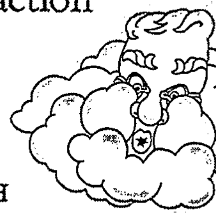
Identifying Customer Needs & Satisfaction



Heather Anne Case, MPH
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
December 1, 1999

Why Did We Participate in This Survey?

- examine whether information products (e.g., web site) contain customer's high interest topics;
- determine which topics to emphasize or de-emphasize
- compare survey results
- set baseline of interest and satisfaction
- formulate hypotheses for study of customer needs, satisfaction, and behavior.

American Customer Satisfaction Survey Design

- **Target Population:** American public
- **Sample Population:** reference librarians from public and university libraries
- **Sample Size:** 260
- **Sample Frame:** librarians were randomly sampled from an American Libraries Association listing

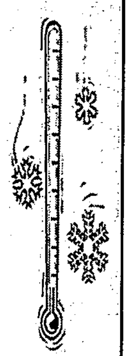
Topics Tested

- Drinking water safety
- Polluted lakes, rivers, streams, and oceans
- Hazardous waste
- Health statistics
- Pesticides on food
- Recycling
- Secondhand smoke
- Climate change
- Air pollution from cars, industry, or other sources
- Industrial compliance with environmental laws and regulations
- Accidental and routine releases of chemicals from industrial facilities
- Endangered species (e.g., animals, fish, or plants)

Survey Questions

- Selected for each topic:

(1)I sought information & was satisfied
(2)I sought information & was dissatisfied
(3)I sought information & couldn't find it
(4)I have not sought
(5)I don't know
(6)I refuse to answer this question



Topics Sought by Reference Librarians

	Percent Who Sought on Web site
Hazardous waste	70%
Air pollution	62%
Drinking water safety	60%
Polluted lakes, rivers, and streams, oceans	59%
Endangered species	58%
Recycling	51%
Climate change	46%
Industrial compliance	37%
Accidental & routine releases of chemicals	37%
Pesticides on food	34%
Health statistics	33%
Secondhand smoke	19%

Percent of Librarians Dissatisfied

	Percent Dissatisfied Who Sought
Industrial Compliance	21%
Health Statistics	19%
Hazardous Waste	12%
Polluted Lakes, Rivers, Streams	11%
Accidental Release of Chemicals	9%
Endangered Species	8%
Air Pollution	8%
Recycling	7%
Pesticides on Food	6%
Climate Change	5%
Drinking Water Safety	4%
Second Hand Smoke	1%

Percent of Librarians Who Were Unable to Find Information on a Topic

Health Statistics	10%
Pesticides on Food	5%
Hazardous Waste	4%
Accidental Releases of Chemicals	4%
Endangered Species	4%
Climate Change	4%
Drinking Water Safety	4%
Industrial Compliance	3%
Polluted Lakes, Rivers, Streams	3%
Air Pollution	3%
Recycling	2%
Secondhand Smoke	2%

What Did We Learn?

Content Management

- With the exception endangered species and health statistics, web site contains information that is of high interest to its customers

- Suggest: emphasize hazardous waste, air pollution, drinking water safety, and water pollution data and information. Less attention to information on second hand smoke.

Baseline

- One in five that seek information on industrial compliance and health statistics are dissatisfied; almost three quarters want information on hazardous waste.

Hypotheses - Why

- Public's definition of, "the environment."
- Public interaction with reference librarians

Session Name and Time: Responding to Public Pressure

Featured Speakers: Gary Doniger, Director, Taxpayer Service in IRS Taxpayer Treatment and Service Improvement Office and Jim Jones, Deputy Director, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) - Baltimore District

Presentation Summary: Mr. Doniger, filling in for Judy Tomaso [Program Executive for the Taxpayer Treatment and Service Improvement Program in the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)], discussed how the IRS responded to intense scrutiny by evaluating feedback from many different customers and sources to develop a realistic plan of action. He also discussed IRS accomplishments in implementing that plan which refocused the agency on its customers. Prioritizing rather than knee-jerk reacting is essential as is listening to all customers (not just most vocal) and refocusing the agency from numbers to service was key. Balanced performance measures are essential, and all 3 areas (customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction and business performance) must be treated as equally important. Measures cannot be "beans" only. Top management must "walk the talk". The taxpayer treatment decision making group reports directly to IRS Commissioner. Involving front-line employees (in getting feedback, analyzing and understanding it and using customer feedback) is important along with improving internal service and the work environment.

Mr. Jones presented a case study about responding to significant public pressure at a highly visible former waste disposal site in the middle of a neighborhood in Washington, DC which encompassed embassies and expensive homes. This case study shows the different degrees of public pressure and the importance of listening to partners and customers (local health department found new areas of concern). The immediacy of impact on customers often intensifies the public pressure. This also is an example of listening to customers even when we are "the experts".

Both speakers addressed several similar issues: importance of top involvement, need to go beyond normal work hours to meet customer needs, need to prioritize feedback and set realistic goals.

Important Ideas from the Discussion:

The IRS had begun its own internal improvements before the external pressure was applied to the agency. However, much of that was overshadowed by the congressional and public pressures. Congress passed restructuring legislation which is very customer service oriented as is the IRS Commissioner. The Taxpayer Advocate reports directly to Congress on agency challenges. The IRS sought and used employee feedback, and the agency established an equity task force to look at tax laws and regulations from a customer viewpoint.

IRS Approach to Responding to Public Pressure:

1. Agency identified and listened to customers: Individual taxpayers, self-employed, small businesses, large corporations, practitioners, Congress, employees.
2. Create organization and plan for deal with competing priorities and different needs.
3. IRS began with a change in its mission statement: took out "collecting taxes" entirely and focused on service. Then the agency integrated service into its goals and objectives:
   - Service to each taxpayer (filing, first quality service pre- and post-filing)
   - Service to all taxpayers (equity, overall voluntary compliance.

4. IRS improved productivity and built a quality work environment by:
   - Creating an executive level program (Taxpayer Treatment and Service Improvement) reporting directly to agency head – this is the Key Change Program and is the focal point for near-term (18 month) change.
   - Setting up an executive forum for making choices and prioritizing efforts with the agency head serving on this.

5. Prioritize – can't accomplish everything [IRS Commissioner says "Best is the enemy of good." The agency had to set realistic goals from a list of 5300 separate initiatives gathered from customer and employee feedback. IRS linked these together to get a more manageable number and then used a cost-benefit (risk analysis) approach to set priorities. The criteria for this analysis were: results and benefits, impact on customers and employees, organizational capacity to accomplish, and how long to accomplish.

6. Implementation
   - Employees must see the connection of each initiative to the goals, mission, and vision of the organization
   - Integrate key organizational processes – budget, strategic plan, and measures (one drives the other) and employees must see these are directed toward goals and mission.
   - Understand customers – must listen continuously and assess feedback continuously

IRS Accomplishments to date on Taxpayer Treatment and Improved Service
- 24/7 telephone with a live person – have nationwide routing (through Atlanta)
- Electronic Filing and payment (now piloting with electronic signature)
- Expanded (standardized) walk-in assistance
- Small business corner on web partnered with private sector
- Local and national problem solving days
- Specific opportunities for Commissioner to talk directly to customer groups
- Simplified Alternative Payment methods
- Taxpayer Advisory Groups

Improved Work Environment
- Elevated grade levels
- Provided electronic research (for laws, regs, and guidance)
- Required customer satisfaction training
- Balance measures – customer, employee, and business practices all equally important

3-day training on this for managers and 1 ½ for employees

Jim Jones, Deputy Engineer for the largest Corps District, is now responsible for cleaning up chemical warfare material disposed/stored from the early 1900's in an area in the middle of the nation's capital. This neighborhood now has embassies and expensive residences (1200 private homes at an average cost of $3,000,000. In remediating and restoring the area, the USACE had to deal with foreign soil on the embassies. The customers included the Spring Valley residents, the ambassadors (and their governments), and property owners in the area. Other stakeholders were EPA, state government, the Secret Service, local government, and the media.

The customer concerns were health and safety, noise, direct impact on lives, comprehensive investigation and clean up, property values, emergencies and unexpected events, media coverage, evacuations/relocation, property restoration (at embassies required working with foreign governments for approval), terrorism, work schedules.

The USACE met weekly with all property owners, did one-on-one interviews, used newsletters, a web site, and updated an 800 number daily. The agency also held weekly media days and delivered by hand letters to residents before any major event. The deputy himself met with the families.

- When one family wanted relocating (right next to site with small children and a nanny in the house alone all day), the Corps tested thoroughly and found excess exposure to justify relocation although contamination did not warrant a buyout as residents would have preferred.

Key Questions of the Speaker:

Question: How are restoration sites prioritized? Did affluent neighborhood make a difference?
Answer: No, but the fact that this is one of only 2 residential contaminated sites for which the military installations are responsible did make it a priority.

Question: How did the public pressure affect IRS employees?
Answer: They were angry and hurt. Many wanted to leave agency. The Disclosure Rule, which prohibited IRS employees from commenting on open cases, meant they could not defend themselves.

Comment: IRS is one of most supportive agencies for Hassle-Free Communities and gets high customer satisfaction ratings.

Question: Why wasn't this site publicized more?
Answer: Initially, much more coverage was given and there was more local interest. However, as Corps provided all the information they had and worked closely with impacted customers and set up the 800 number and web site, the neighborhood became comfortable and trust was established. The issues were no longer sensational.

Question: Did USACE consider an on-site information office?
Answer: The Corps did use a full-time on-site office initially until the neighborhood and media were satisfied and the interest died down. Then coverage was reduced and replaced by 800 number, the web site, and door-to-door letters (when needed).

Question: How does government make something right when there is not authority or funding to do so?
Answer: By doing all that an agency can to share information with customers and provide all the assistance possible.

How can EPA use this information?EPA can use the IRS example in balancing our performance measures, prioritizing customer feedback, strategic planning, focusing vision and mission on service to customers, and in establishing customer service standards and plans. USACE lessons learned can be applied in working with customers who are directly impacted by agency actions.

Where in EPA can this information be used? These practices and lessons learned can be used at the Agency level and by most organizations within the agency that are interested in refocusing programs on customers and agency impact on customers. Both speakers provided information on how to listen and respond to customer needs and how to satisfy customers. The IRS provides an example of how to refocus an organization on customers and service starting with the agency mission and moving through measuring results. Programs like Superfund and RCRA, CBEP and NEP, as well as many other programs, can use these principles in working with communities.

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Perspective of an Assistant Administrator

Timothy Fields, Jr.
Assistant Administrator Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response

Good Afternoon everyone. I am honored to have been asked to speak to you today about customer service, a subject I take very seriously and a concept that I believe needs to be integrated into all aspects of our work.

In the past, good government meant that we told our customers and stakeholders what was best for them. In recent years, there has been an effort to change that thinking. Government is in the midst a culture change. We are evolving into an entity that listens more and talks less; that brings in customer viewpoints and perspectives earlier in the process, not after the decisions we've made have impacted them.

We are now striving to make information more available, understandable, and accessible. We are delegating more decisions and urging staff and partners to take responsibility. We are building the internal and external relationships that will enable EPA to thrive in the 21st Century.

Still, we are not yet there. To truly change the culture of any organization is a daunting and very time consuming challenge.

Think of it as you would building a fire. It takes planning and gathering the right materials and tools. At first it ignites and burns intensely. However, if left unattended, its energy dwindles, and the fire begins to burn out. Fire, like a culture change, requires constant attention and kindling, and re-kindling if it is to sustain itself and burn brightly. You are all the keepers of the fire.

To successfully achieve a culture change --you must first have a vision. Ask yourself where do you want to be in 2005? Once you've determined your vision you must be prepared to be courageous. By this I mean you must be willing to challenge the status quo; move to a place that's different and therefore perhaps uncomfortable.

To successfully achieve a culture change -- you must consistently communicate your vision. This means you need to reinforce your vision to underscore its importance. For example, in EPA's case, we must continually emphasize and reinforce to our workforce what we are trying to achieve and that the steps we need to take may very well challenge the status quo. It is important for people to understand they are an integral part of that change.

To achieve a culture change – it is essential to establish an infrastructure. This means we must put programs and tools in place to support our vision. Once in place, we must continuously market and promote the vision as well as the programs and tools. It is critical to keep reminding your audience of where you are trying to go and your ultimate destination. For example my office has taken the lead on establishing an "Agency Honor Award" for customer service. This award would be precedent setting, as it would be the first time excellence in customer service would be recognized at this level.

To achieve a culture change-- we must obtain input and feedback from our customers. Getting buy-in and agreement from stakeholders on where we want to be is critical to our getting there. We must affirm and reaffirm our evolving vision using customer input and feedback. For example, customer surveys are a way we solicit information directly from our customers.

Another ingredient for achieving a successful culture change lies in our ability to maintain flexibility. We must be willing to modify our thinking and the way we do business.

Achieving a culture change requires that we devote resources to our vision, whether they be money or people. We must be prepared make a full commitment to the vision if it is to reach fruition. For example, OSWER was one of the EPA organizations to create a monetary award ($2,500) dedicated to exemplary customer service. I took the lead and set aside the money at the start of the year, ear-marked for this recognition.

Also you must know your playing field--By this I mean that you need to anticipate the obstacles and outside forces that may impede your success.

I'd like to share with you my vision for the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) in terms of achieving a culture change. I work hard at building an organization that is mission based and customer focused. We must be responsive to our customers, create opportunities to obtain their input and feedback, and make information clear and easily accessible. We must do all this while protecting public health and the environment. In OSWER, we don't see customer service as separate and apart from our mission. Rather, serving our partners and customers well is integral to the way we do business and how we carry out our work.

For example, OSWER is committed to providing public access to a wide variety of policy, guidance, and interpretive documents that have been developed to support our regulations and statutes. We recently developed an interactive query system that will give EPA and the public online access to official guidance documents. This database has extensive search capabilities, which will provide easy access to thousands of documents that interpret our statutes and regulations.

The Agency's commitment to providing the public access to documents online has been a tremendous customer service effort. Before these documents were made easily accessible on the Internet, OSWER received between 10 to 20 FOIA requests a day. Now, with enhanced public access, we receive an average of 5 FOIA requests a week.

In another example, OSWER's Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Office (CEPPO), in an effort to provide excellent customer service, asked their customers (through a workgroup created under the Federal Advisory Committee Act) to help them design an electronic submission system and public access system for Risk Management Plans required to be submitted under the Clean Air Act.

The workgroup made a number of recommendations which were implemented by CEPPO. Among these suggestions was that electronic submission should be required. Given that this was the first time the Agency required electronic submission for a facility report, CEPPO also allowed for an electronic waiver to cover instances when it was necessary for a facility to report in paper.

The Agency received over 14,000 RMPS in June of this year when the RMPS were first due. Of these 97% submitted electronically which contributed significantly to the Agency being able to post this information in the public access database (RMP*Info) in Envirofacts by early June.

Of the electronic submissions, 87% were determined to be complete upon receipt. In sharp contrast, of the 3% paper submissions, only 16% were complete upon receipt.

Anecdotal information to date is that the facilities were pleased with the user friendliness of the submission system and implementing agencies are happy with the quick access to the plans in Envirofacts.

Having worked at EPA for most of my career, I hope that I have gained some insight into our customers. I understand and see our work as more encompassing than writing regs and enforcing rules. I value the importance of listening to our customers and understanding their issues.

In order to achieve my vision for OSWER I have established a Customer Service Workgroup to:

- build an infrastructure and framework to advance CS throughout OSWER
- market the program
- train the staff
- recognize and reward staff
- solicit customer feedback through various mechanisms (surveys, conferences, etc.);
- share information with each other and other organizations
- keep me apprized of program progress

I'm sure that many other organizations have programs similar to OSWER's. For those of you who don't, I urge you to begin. After all, the culture is already changing. Work with me to continue to lead change, share the vision, and model doing the right things right! I ask you to tend the customer service fire. Thank you all for your time, dedication, and support.

Important Ideas from the Discussion:

In order to successfully achieve a culture change in any organization you must: have a vision; be prepared to challenge the status quo; put together programs to support the vision; consistently market and promote the programs and tools; earmark resources specifically for the programs; obtain input and feed back from customers; and be willing to modify your thinking and way you do business.

Key Questions of the Speaker:
Question: Are other Assistant Administrators as involved/dedicated to improving customer service as you are?
Answer: Not all are. We are trying to work together. The Assistant Administrators and the Regional Administrators have met and are adopting and adapting customer service programs such as the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response's in their own organizations. We are now in the process of taking the customer service initiative to the Agency level–with the Agency Honor Award. This type of recognition will encourage all AA's and RA's to establish a program.

Question: In the Regions we essentially have two bosses, Regional Administrators and Assistant Administrators such as your self. The Regional Administrators are starting to get on board with customer service. Would it be possible to extend your leadership to the Regions to help push them along?
Answer: I will do that. In fact, many of the AA's and RA's will be attending my next meeting today, and I will make sure that customer service is discussed.

How can EPA use this information? The agency can use this information as an outline for effectively influencing employee behavior and successfully changing the culture of an organization.

Where in EPA can this information be used? In any organization willing/dedicated to improving customer service in their respective offices. This includes other federal agencies, state and local governments, and all types of private industries.

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Summary of a speech presented during EPA's 1999 National Customer Service Conference November 30 - December 1

Leading Change Throughout Any Organization- Plenary Session

Closing Session: Getting to the Heart of Change

Featured Speaker: Doug Krug, Enlightened Leadership

Moderator: Derry Allen, EPA Office of Policy & Reinvention

Presentation Summary:

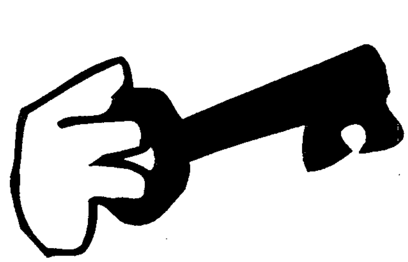
Doug Krug told us that change in any organization comes one person at a time through individual transformation. To change, each of has to decide to overcome negativity, shift from apathy to ownership, deal with all people - including the difficult ones, shift the focus from problems to solutions, communicate without resistance. We need to stop responding automatically to situations from our old mind sets, and become more conscious of what we personally do, particularly what we do well. We need to decide what is working and do more of it because that leads us to be more productive, more satisfied and less stressed.

In the process of "being on a roll" we get better at "being on a roll." Work becomes a true source of satisfaction. To get on and stay on "a roll", we have to determine what is it we want to accomplish, what is working to get us there, and why specifically it is working. We need to understand the benefits for all if we accomplish the goals. We can then focus on what we want more of, what we can do better and what to do differently. Doug asked us how many of us start a meeting with "What's going right" rather than "What's gone wrong?"

When we start looking at what's gone right, we can dig into the specifics of what is contributing to the successes and what we need to do (and the resources necessary) to close the gaps between where we are now and the desired state. We don't need to have detailed plans to do the right things right, but we all need to clearly see the goals and decide what we can do next to best approach them. We should frequently question the assumptions we run on in the light of recent changes; things that used to work may no longer. We should look for the relationships between what we are doing and what others are doing to approach goals. We should constantly be seeking others' involvement as well as ways to improve whatever we do.

In the past, leaders were the people with the best answers, the people who told others what to do. Now and in the future, the leaders will be those who have the best questions so they can access the best answers. They will not waste time and resources on solving problems that don't matter to the future of the organization or customers' and employees' satisfaction.

If we look at what is working well instead of focusing on problems and trying to fix blame, we can better envision achieving big picture goals. We validate what's been done, build energy/momentum, build a sense of team, and constantly look for the next do-able thing to accomplish. In the process of "being on a roll," we getter better at being on a roll; resistance dissolves. People increase their confidence and competence, feel more aligned with the organization, and feel more personally accountable for its success. Focus changes to what is working, what do we want more of and how to get it done, and then what else needs doing, and after that what else?



Doug told the audience that if we are personally stuck, or if our organization is stuck in a rut or an old mind set, it is not because there is no solution; it's because we are not asking the right questions. Leaders are everywhere; they ask the right questions. Hear and heed them, and support their leadership.

Where in EPA can this information be used? Everywhere

Any commitments to follow-up action at EPA: Participants were enthusiastic about possibilities.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ALL SPEAKERS AND MODERATORS

FREDERICK W. (DERRY) ALLEN

Derry Allen is Counselor to the Assistant Administrator for Policy and Reinvention at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In this job he is involved in a number of issues concerning environmental planning and information, including Industrial Ecology. He also manages the EPA Customer Service Staff.

Since 1978, Derry has served in variety of positions, principally in the Policy Office. He was Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Environmental Data from 1992 to 1998. He has also been Senior Policy Advisor to the Assistant Administrator for Policy, Planning and Evaluation, Deputy Director of the Science, Economics and Statistics Division and the Regulatory Integration Division, Associate Director of the Office of Policy Analysis, Acting Director of the Energy Policy Division, Chief of the Energy Development Branch, and Staff Director of the Interagency Resource Conservation Committee. In the course of these assignments he has been involved in a wide range of environmental, management and communications issues for the agency.

Before coming to EPA, Derry worked on the staff of the Secretary of Labor, at the Federal Energy Administration, at the Cost of Living Council and as a VISTA Volunteer with the City of New York Department of Correction.

He earned his B.A. with Honors at Yale University in 1969 and his M.B.A. at the Harvard Business School in 1973. In the summer of 1998 he participated in the Program for Senior Managers in Government at the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government.

Derry lives in Washington, D.C., with his wife and three children. He is active in several community organizations. When he gets a break he enjoys reading and outdoor sports.

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W. MICHAEL McCABE

Appointed by President Clinton in 1995, Michael McCabe served as Regional Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency's Middle Atlantic Region until two weeks ago when he became Acting Deputy Administrator. In cooperation with Governors and senior state officials, he led the implementation of Federal environmental programs in Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. He directed a staff of 1,000 engineers, scientists, attorneys and support specialists. EPA's programs respond comprehensively to a wide variety of environmental challenges, including air and water pollution, hazardous waste management and cleanup, and ecosystem restoration.

Mike has worked steadily to fulfill the primary environmental mandate of the Clinton/Gore Administration: to protect public health and improve environmental compliance through more flexible, cost effective and common sense regulations. As Printing Sector co-chair of the Agency's National Common Sense Initiative he streamlined permitting and pollution control measures to achieve superior environmental performance for the printing industry. McCabe has encouraged regional staff to test new performance-based approaches to environmental protection and Region III leads the nation with the highest number of innovative regulatory pilot projects under Project XL. He also has been an advocate for customer service excellence.

Mike has served as Agency lead in achieving an industry-led national approach to manage nutrient-rich waste generated by poultry feeding operations. He spearheaded a four-agency Federal effort to reform environmental review and permitting of mountaintop mining and valley fill operations in the Appalachian states. He also serves as Federal representative to the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission.

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RICHARD FARRELL

Richard Farrell became EPA's Associate Administrator for the Office of Reinvention on June 14. The Office of Policy and the Office of Reinvention will soon be merging into the Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation within the Office of the Administrator. That new office will lead the Agency's efforts to: expand innovative environmental management approaches that promise greater efficiency and effectiveness; support economic analysis and multi-media work; implement various administrative statutes and executive orders; expand and improve small business and customer service activities.

Rick had served as Director of Management and Administration at the U.S. Department of Energy since October 1998. From 1995 to 1998, he was Secretary of the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, the state's largest regulatory and consumer protection department. He was Vice-President for Government Affairs of the Syntex Corporation from 1988 to 1994.

For sixteen years, from 1972 to 1988, he served on the staff of Florida's former U.S. Senator, Lawton Chiles, as Chief of Staff and Legislative Director. Farrell holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in government from Florida State University.

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CHARLES N. JEFFRESS

Charles N. Jeffress, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health, has spent the past 20 years working on labor and workplace issues. Prior to his nomination by President Clinton to head the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Mr. Jeffress was Deputy Commissioner and Director of OSHA at the North Carolina Department of Labor. From 1992 until 1997, he supervised North Carolina OSHA enforcement, consultation, education and training activities.

Sworn in as Assistant Secretary on November 12, 1997, Mr. Jeffress now directs a staff of more than 2,200 with a budget of $353 million. His goal is to reduce injuries, illnesses, and fatalities among the more than 100 million workers at six million work sites that come under OSHA's jurisdiction. Mr. Jeffress is committed to changing OSHA through a five-year strategic plan that is increasing the agency's effectiveness in improving workplace safety and health. Chief among his priorities are establishing a standard for safety and health programs and a standard on ergonomics. Mr. Jeffress has brought a strong customer focus to the work of OSHA.

From 1977 to 1992, Mr. Jeffress served as Assistant Commissioner of the North Carolina Department of Labor, focusing on program management, government affairs and policy development. He served as the chief legislative lobbyist for the department with the state legislature and advised the Commissioner on issues relating to occupational safety and health, employment standards and job training, and personnel.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is a 1980 graduate of the Government Executives Institute at the UNC - Chapel Hill School of Business Administration, and a 1990 graduate of the Program for Senior Executives in Government at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Mr. Jeffress currently also serves as Chairman of the regulatory agencies subgroup of NPR's Federal Advisory Committee for Excellence in Customer Satisfaction.

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ROBERT WOLCOTT

Robert Wolcott became Senior Counselor to the Associate Administrator for Policy & Reinvention at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in August 1999. Prior to that time he had been the Acting Deputy Administrator for the Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation (OPPE), overseeing a wide spectrum of multi-media environmental programs, economic analysis, strategic planning, environmental statistics, economic sector analysis and special initiatives. Rob has headed a number of divisions in OPPE, including the Divisions of Economic Analysis, natural Resources and Water and Agricultural Policy. For the past two years he has been the Chairman of EPA's Customer Service Steering Committee.

From 1983 - 1985, Rob served as Senior Policy Advisor to EPA Administrator William Ruckelshaus, and prior to that, he directed the Public Interest Economics Foundation, a Washington, DC - based economic research and education organization.

Rob's training is in economics, business and philosophy. He is married and has four children. He sports and time with his family.

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ANNE LAURENT

Anne Laurent has covered federal agency management as a writer and editor since 1985. At *Government Executive* magazine, she writes about entrepreneurial government, acquisition reform, capital planning, information technology management, downsizing, and workplace violence, managing for results, and agency culture change, among other issues. Anne also is the project editor for the Government Performance Project. The project is a joint effort by the magazine and Syracuse University's Alan K. Campbell Public Affairs Institute rating management performance in agencies with high levels of interaction with the public. For four years, Laurent served as Senior Editor of *Federal Times* newspaper where she wrote the weekly "Careers" column and editorials. Before that, she was a reporter with *Federal Times* for six years, covering Congress, the federal courts, the Pentagon and a variety of management issues.

In the past year, Anne Laurent opened a new beat for *Government Executive* covering entrepreneurs within federal agencies. She also has written a research grant report on that subject for the PricewaterhouseCoopers Endowment for the Business of Government. Anne believes that entrepreneurial enterprises exhibit the kinds of innovative, risk-taking and customer-focused behaviors vital to successful government in the Information Age. She also believes good, explanatory journalism about government is the key to ensuring the success of participatory democracy.

Anne holds a BA in political science from the University of Michigan and an MA from Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. She spends many of her non-working hours training Rex, her new Standard Poodle, reading, walking, and enjoying nature with her partner Lauren in their woodsy neighborhood near Takoma Park, Md.

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RENE A. HENRY

Rene Henry is a Fellow of the Public Relations Society of America, has been Director of the Office of Communications & Governments Relations for EPA's mid-Atlantic states region since September 1996. He has had diverse careers in public relations, sports marketing, housing and real estate, television and entertainment, politics, higher education and as a trade association CEO.

In the mid-70s, he co-founded what became the second largest international public relations firm in the West with offices in Los Angeles, New York, Washington and Paris. He counseled

Fortune 500 companies, leaders in entertainment and sports, and even foreign governments. His firm was the first to establish Hispanic Marketing and Sports Marketing divisions in a major U.S. public relations or advertising agency. From 1986-88 he was President and CEO of the National Institute of Building Sciences (Washington, D.C.) and responsible for projects involving abatement of asbestos, radon and lead-based paint, indoor air quality and the use of abandoned and foreclosed housing for the homeless and people of low incomes. He worked closely with Mayor Tom Bradley and his team and Hollywood producer David Wolper to direct international media activities to get Los Angeles the 1984 Olympic Games. He was a senior member of George Bush's 1988 campaign team and later served in the Bush Administration. From 1991-1996 he was one of the institution's five senior officers and a member of the president's executive cabinet as Executive Director of University Relations at Texas A&M in College Station.

He has produced and directed award-winning videos and television documentaries and authored books on land investment, utility cogeneration, sports, marketing public relations and crisis communications. He received his A.B. degree in economics from The College of William & Mary and did graduate study in marketing at West Virginia University.

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TOM REICH

Tom Reich is a Charter Employee with EPA with over 32 years service. Current responsibilities involve water quality management planning and the State Continuing Planning Process for Water Quality Planning and Management. Previous positions include serving as the Customer Service Liaison for the Water Program, Lead Region Coordinator for the National Water Program, Wastewater Treatment Operations and Maintenance Coordinator for Region 6, NEPA Coordinator, and project officer for virtually every water quality grant program. Prior to EPA Tom worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as one of their first water quality employees and was in charge of two of the Corps' first seven water quality studies in the late sixties. Tom transferred to the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration of the Department of Interior, which became the Federal Water Quality Administration just before EPA was established.

Tom has always been a strong supporter of customer service. He served on the Region 6 Customer Service Council for several years and is a certified trainer for EPA's customer service workshops. Tom is also a trained facilitator and is part of the Dallas/Fort Worth Federal Executive Board Mediation Cadre. Among other activities Tom served as an EEO Councilor for several years and developed and coordinated the EPA Region 6 Regional Administrator's Environmental Excellence Awards Program.

Tom holds a BS-CE and a MS in Engineering from the University of Cincinnati and is a Registered Professional Engineer. At home Tom enjoys his two grandsons and working in his beautifully landscaped yard. Tom's long-range plan is to go into part to full time Christian service.

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LYNNE MOSS

Lynne Moss has worked for the State of Oklahoma for 26 years in several environmental areas. Currently, she is responsible for managing the environmental complaints program for the Department of Environmental Quality. Lynne has always enjoyed helping citizens get answers or services from their government and has a keen interest in preserving our environment for future generations. Working for another agency, Department of Pollution Control, she was instrumental in designing a mechanism for citizens to report their pollution concerns and getting that information to the correct agency. When DEQ was established six years ago, Lynne was very involved in the development of the complaints program again insuring that citizens were involved in the process.

Citizens of Oklahoma are proud of their state and want to preserve it for their children and grandchildren. Lynne believes that, as a member of state government, she has a responsibility to assist those citizens who have environmental concerns get resolution. Additionally, by way of reporting environmental episodes, citizens assist the agency in finding and eliminating environmental pollution. Aware that some issues would not be violations, Lynne insured that mediation was available to citizens.

Lynne attended Central State University in Edmond, OK. She loves gardening, traveling, particularly in the mountains, and time spent with her nearly grown family.

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JUDITH A. DUNCAN

Judy Duncan has worked in environmental programs for the State of Oklahoma for 26 years. Her current responsibilities include managing the Department of Environmental Quality's customer assistance and laboratory programs.

Judy has been a public school teacher of science and biology and has worked in a trace metals research laboratory. Her first assignments included helping to develop programs for following up on inspections of water and wastewater inspections. She later became the director of the state's environmental laboratory.

In 1993, when the DEQ was formed by consolidation of environmental agencies, Judy was given the opportunity to help Oklahoma become the first state in the nation to develop a customer assistance program. This program has served as a model for other states. In addition to providing various customer assistance, information and outreach activities, the Customer Services Division serves as a focal point within the agency for initiatives aimed at simplification of regulatory programs in Oklahoma.

Judy holds a BA in Biological Sciences from Oklahoma State University. She is an avid reader of mysteries and is learning to enjoy four-wheeling with her husband in his new jeep.

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BARRY D. NUSSBAUM

Barry Nussbaum has just assumed the position of chief of the Analytical Products Branch in the EPA's new Office of Information. Prior to that he was a statistician in EPA's Center for Environmental Information and Statistics. He has been involved in the data suitability analyses which reviewed the applicability of major EPA databases for secondary uses. He has also served as chairman and organizer of the annual EPA Conference on Environmental Statistics and Information.

Barry has been with the Environmental Protection Agency since 1975. He began his EPA career as chief of the Data Management and Analysis Section in the Office of Mobile Source Enforcement. In that office, he collected and analyzed data leading to the development of vapor recovery programs and motor vehicle emission testing programs. He designed (and defended in court!) sampling plans for motor vehicle recalls, most notably the precedent setting Chrylser recall of 208,000 cars based on a sample of 10 of those vehicles. He was promoted to Branch Chief of the Technical Support Branch and then the Fuels Branch. In this capacity, he integrated technical, legal, statistical, and policy concerns into actions regarding the phasedown of leaded gasoline, the effects of fuel additives, and the extent of motor vehicle emission control tampering. For these efforts, he received two EPA Silver Medals for Superior Service.

Barry got his start in the field of customer service as a waiter between college semesters in the Catskills (where else?). It is a great place to receive instant reaction on customer satisfaction! Outside EPA, he is the chair-elect of the Environment Section of the American Statistical Association. He has also survived two terms as the treasurer of the Ravensworth Elementary School PTA.

Dr. Nussbaum has a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and both a master's and a doctorate in operations research (with minors in statistics and economics) from the George Washington University. He has also taught graduate statistics courses for George Washington University and Virginia Tech.

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COLLEEN BLESSING

Colleen Blessing has worked for the Federal Government for over 26 years, 21 of them with the Energy Information Administration. As head of the Customer Survey Committee, Colleen oversees the design, fielding and data analysis of agency-wide customer surveys. Customer feedback analysis includes reviewing Web customer comments and suggestions, and disseminating the information to encourage improvements. Ms. Blessing also serves as the press officer for her agency, making sure that press releases drafted by scientists and other professionals are written in English so customers can understand the information. Before moving into her customer survey and feedback role in 1994, Colleen did (much less exciting) budget preparation and planning work for her agency.

Colleen is a firm believer in asking customers what they think, rather than just trying to guess. Results from customer surveys (albeit "shoestring" efforts) have been key in shaping her agency's strategic goals and helping them make resource decisions. She has learned most everything she knows about customer surveying from conferences like these and on-the-job training. She is the Customer Focus representative on her agency's Quality Council, which gives her an opportunity to represent the customer point of view in agency activities. Recently, she has become fascinated by not just listening to customers but actually watching them use agency products such as the Web site. It's amazing what you can learn from asking and watching!

Colleen holds a BA in Economics from the University of California, Los Angeles, and an MA in Economics from George Washington University. She enjoys being a Cadette Girl Scout leader and an Odyssey of the Mind coach with her two daughters.

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DIANE MCCREARY

Diane McCreary has been with EPA for 22 years. She is responsible for managing the Regional Center for Environmental Information (formerly the Region III Library). The Center provides information services to EPA staff and the public and maintains both Internet and Intranet sites. In addition, is a member of the Region's public access team which designs and implements environmental information products in response to identified public needs. She also serves as co-chair of the EPA Web Workgroup's Public Access Committee.

Diane wholeheartedly agrees with Thomas Jefferson: People...."are inherently capable of making proper judgments when they are properly informed." EPA has an obligation to make environmental information readily available to the public so that the public in turn can make informed choices on such issues as resource use and regulation.

Diane obtained a BA in English from Penn State and an Master of Library Science from the University of Pittsburgh. She enjoys quilting, gardening and, of course, reading. Recently, she began taking piano lessons and hopes to play at least a few carols by Christmas.

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CLARENCE HARDY

Clarence Hardy has spent much of his 30-year Federal service career in personnel and human resources management. In his current position, as director of a staff office of the Administrator (Office of Cooperative Environmental Management), his responsibilities include convening advisory committees of experts to ensure the Agency's efficient, effective decision-making on environmental policy and regulation. He is also responsible for the Federal Advisory Committee Act oversight function for EPA. Prior to appointment to his current position, Clarence held several executive positions in EPA's departmental level human resources organizations, including Director of the Personnel Management Division, and Deputy Director of the Office of Human Resources Management. In 1996 and 1997 Clarence held concurrent positions in the Brookings Institution Congressional Fellows Program and as a Legislative Assistant and Policy Advisor to Congresswoman Nancy Johnson (R-CT).

Clarence has spent his entire career serving customers, whether the customer was an EPA employee, someone in the general public, or a technical advisor to the agency. His goal as Director of the Office of Cooperative Environmental Management is to ensure that the office builds and preserves cooperative relations to help EPA achieve its mission.

Clarence holds a bachelor's degree from North Carolina Central University and a master's degree from Syracuse University. He enjoys his garden and cooking, and particularly eating his favorite foods, such as genuine Southern fried chicken and sweet potatoes.

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CHARLOTTE COTTRILL

Charlotte Cottrill joined EPA working for the Office of Research and Development's Cincinnati Health Effects Laboratory. She also held positions with EPA's National Center for Environmental Assessment and the Office of Science Policy before joining the EMPACT Program and EPA's new Office of Environmental Information.

At the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Charlotte was a member of an in-house statistical and research design support group. She oversaw the design, data collection, data management, and analysis of questionnaire data collected in NIOSH studies.

Before joining the Federal government, Charlotte Cottrill worked for two research firms conducting marketing and social research on a broad range of topics. She was also the Director of Evaluation for a network of neighborhood health clinics in Cincinnati, Ohio.

She holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology of Communication, a Masters Degree in Communication and Survey Research Methods, and a Ph.D. in Science Communication with areas of specialization in Diffusion of Innovations and Technology Transfer. Charlotte lives in Orlean, VA with a her aged Labrador Retriever, three barn cats, and two Thoroughbred horses. When not caring for the dependents or doing maintenance, she's out riding in the Virginia Piedmont.

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JOSEPH S. WHOLEY

Joe Wholey is Professor of Public Administration at the University of Southern California and Senior Advisor for Evaluation Methodology at the U. S. General Accounting Office. His work focuses on the use of strategic planning, performance-based management, and program evaluation to improve program effectiveness, strengthen accountability, support resource allocation and other policy decisionmaking, and help restore confidence in government and nonprofit organizations.

Joe is a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration and a principal in the Council for Excellence in Government. He formerly served in senior positions at the U. S. Office of Management and Budget, the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Urban Institute. He has chaired a number of organizations at state and local levels including the Virginia Board of Social Services, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, Hospice of Northern Virginia, the Arlington County Board, and the Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing.

Joe received his B. A. in mathematics from Catholic University and his M. A. in mathematics and Ph. D. in philosophy from Harvard. His eight books include Evaluation and Effective Public Management, Performance and Credibility (edited, with Mark Abramson and Christopher Bellavita), and Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation (edited, with Harry Hatry and Kathryn Newcomer).

Joe lives in Arlington, Virginia, with his wife, Midge. They have five children and three grandchildren.

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KERRY M. WEISS

Since February of 1997, Kerry has been Director of the EPA Institute for Individual and Organizational Excellence. The Institute has Agency wide responsibility for providing individual and organizational development support and programs. Some of its significant activities include the creation and implementation of an EPA Workforce Development Strategy and the support and coordination of the EPA Human Resources Council. Day-to-day activities include providing training and organizational intervention support to Agency offices.

Kerry's previous EPA positions include: Special Assistant to the Director of the Office of Human Resources and Organizational Services; Director of the Human Resources Staff for Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response, the EPA Quality Advisory Group, and the Human Resources Development Division; Acting Director of the Management and Organization Division and the Waste Management Division in Region V; Chief of the Program Management Analysis Branch; and Senior Management Analyst.

Kerry began his government career in 1974 as an Environmental Statistician with the Bureau of Census. He has given numerous presentations and courses on Human Resource and Quality Management issues and is a skilled group facilitator.

Kerry holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Business/Economics from North Dakota State University. His enjoys building furniture, guitar playing and hiking.

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DANIEL L. RUMELT

Dan Rumelt has worked in federal consumer agencies for more than 20 years. His current responsibilities include managing the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) toll-free Hotline, fax-on-demand service and e-mail response center. He also oversees operation of CPSC's voice telecommunications and audio-video support services. Previously at CPSC, Dan served as Deputy Director of the Office of Information and Public Affairs, where he was responsible for managing the agency's information, education and media relations programs. Before joining the CPSC, he served at the Consumer Information Center of the General Services Administration, where he worked with government agencies and industry to develop publications for distribution through the Center. Prior to that he was Assistant Information Director for the Office of the Special Adviser to the President for Consumer Affairs (a.k.a. the U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs), where he was a speech writer and handled media and consumer relations.

Dan feels that consumers should get the information or assistance they want, or receive correct referrals, wherever in government they make contact. He believes that a call to CPSC should be the last a consumer makes to get a full response to an inquiry about product safety, and the second-to-last call if a referral outside the agency is necessary. Dan participated in the early development of the federal interagency consumer web site hosted by the Federal Trade Commission, (www.consumer.gov), that, through links to government sites, allows consumers to find information by topic rather than by agency.

Dan holds an MA in Journalism from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and a BA in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He enjoys national and international travel, serving on homeowner association boards (to assure sufficient aggravation in his life), and eating spicy foods.

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LAWRENCE A. TELLER

Larry Teller took a 6-month job at the Environmental Protection Agency's new regional office in Philadelphia in 1972, liked what he did, and stayed. Twenty seven years later, he's one of the office's old timers, having held a variety of jobs in environmental review (under NEPA), congressional and intergovernmental relations, public affairs, enforcement and compliance assistance, administration and management and, now, communications coordination and customer service. His current job title--Agency Lead Region Coordinator for EPA's communications, government affairs and customer service programs--largely involves helping EPA's ten regions and headquarters work together on policy, planning, and budgeting for communications and outreach, intergovernmental relations, and customer service. He chairs Region 3's customer service committee, and serves on several agency work groups aiming to make EPA a more customer-driven organization.

Larry attended New York City public schools, and graduated from the Bronx High School of Science, the University of Buffalo (AB, anthropology; elected to Phi Beta Kappa), and the University of Pennsylvania (MCP, city and regional planning). He enrolled in Air Force ROTC, and recently retired from the Air Force Reserve as a colonel--after 28 years of active and reserve duty as a special agent with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. He especially enjoyed nurturing the birth and early years of the Air Force's environmental crimes investigation program. He is an honors graduate of Air War College and Air Command and Staff College. With Jeannie and daughters Abigail and Miriam, he resides in Cherry Hill, NJ.

Larry is a member of the steering committee for EPA's second annual customer service conference, and leads a creative and hard-working group of Region 3 people who look forward with relish to the conference being a pleasurable learning time for all who attend.

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JOHN L. STANTON

John Stanton is a consultant, author, practitioner and teacher of marketing research. He is currently professor of marketing at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia. As a consultant, Dr. Stanton includes among his many clients Campbell Soup Co., Frito-Lay, Kellogg, Miles Laboratories, PepsiCo and Procter &. Gamble. Dr. Stanton is the editor of the *Journal of Food Products Marketing.*

A graduate of Syracuse University (B.S. and Ph.D.), he has taught at Temple University, Philadelphia; University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and Syracuse University, New York. A prolific author, Dr. Stanton has written articles on data analysis techniques, advertising research, brand preference, segmentation and positioning research, which have appeared in the *Journal of Advertising, Marketing Intelligence and Planning, Journal of Marketing Research, American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* and Marketing News.

Recently, Dr. Stanton spent two years as vice president of marketing of Melitta North America while on leave from Saint Joseph's University. Prior to joining Melitta, he spent eight months in Germany analyzing retail food store strategies in the European Community for Tengelmann, the world's largest food retailer, whose chains include A&P and Super Fresh in the United States. *Making Niche Marketing Work* (McGraw-Hill, 1992), which Dr. Stanton wrote with Dr. Robert Linneman, was *Business Week's* Book Club's first choice and has been published in three languages.

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RICHARD J. GEORGE

Richard George is an entrepreneur, author, teacher and former Fortune 500 marketing research and marketing management executive. He is presently professor of food marketing at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia. He has been recognized for his teaching excellence on many occasions and is the recipient of the Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching. As a consultant, Dr. George includes among his clients AT&T, Campbell Soup, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, SmithKline -Beecham, Island Marine, Wyeth-Ayerst, Herr Foods and Tastykake.

A graduate of Saint Joseph's University (B.S.), Harvard University (M.B.A.) and Temple University (Ph.D.), he has taught at the University of Florida; University of London, England; and University College Cork, Ireland. Dr. George has published research on the subjects of marketing strategy, consumer behavior, technological innovations in marketing and business ethics. Articles emanating from his research have appeared in the *,Journal of Consumer Marketing, Journal of Food Products Marketing, Marketing News* and *Journal of Business Ethics.*

In addition to his position as professor of marketing, Dr. George gets to practice what he preaches by running his own corporation, Cruisn 1 Inc., which operates tour boats offering dolphin-watching and eco-tours off the coast of New Jersey.

Delight Me ... The Ten Commandments of Customer Sert,dce (Raphel Publishing, 1997), which Dr. George also co-authored with Dr. Stanton, is considered one of the best books for taking customer service from rhetoric to reality.

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MARK S. COLEMAN

Mark Coleman entered public service in 1970 and was the Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Health Services of the State Health Department from the mid 1970s until the Department of Environmental Quality was created by the Oklahoma legislature in July 1993. At that time, he was named Executive Director of the newly formed agency.

Mark Coleman is a 1966 graduate of the University of Oklahoma, has a Master's degree in Environmental Health from Oklahoma University, and a Master's in Biochemistry from North Carolina State University. He serves on a number of state and national organizations relative to environmental quality. Mark lives with his wife, Cindy, in Edmond.

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DON WELSH

Donald Welsh is the Deputy Secretary for State/Federal Relations at the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. He has responsibility for managing the relationship between the Department and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on policy issues regarding the implementation of federally-delegated environmental programs. He also works closely with the Governor's office on the Ridge Administration's federal environmental legislative priorities, and with the Environmental Council of the States on the development of innovative regulatory approaches and new measures of program effectiveness.

Don originally joined DEP on an Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignment from the U.S. EPA, where he had previously served as Chief of the Government Affairs Branch and Executive Assistant to the Regional Administrator. He has also served as Chief Legislative Assistant to U.S. Congressman Bud Shuster.

Don holds a BA in Political Science from the University of Pennsylvania.

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LANCE R. MILLER

Lance is the Director of the Division of Watershed Management in New jersey's Department of Environmental Protection. He manages the agency's efforts to implement watershed management. In addition, the Division is responsible for establishing the State's surface and ground water quality standards and monitoring the State's waters (both fresh and salt water).

Lance served as the Executive Director of USEPA's Permits Improvement Team from 1994 though 1997. The Team developed recommendations to improve the environmental permitting system after extensive discussions with impacted stakeholder groups. During this period, he also served on EPA's Customer Service Team and helped to develop the Six Rules of Customer Service. He has been a major advocate for customer service at DEP.

Lance was the Assistant Commissioner for the Department's Site Remediation Program prior to his detail to EPA. He has worked for the Department for over 23 years.

Lance attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and received a Bachelors of Science degree in Environmental Sciences in 1976 from Rutgers University. He is a Leadership New Jersey graduate – Class of 1993.

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MARYLOUISE UHLIG

Currently, Ms. Uhlig serves as the Director of the Office of Program Management Operations in the Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances (OPPTS) at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In this capacity she serves as principal advisor to the Assistant Administrator on OPPTS policy, program planning, management, resources and general administration. Her responsibilities range from budget oversight to facilitation of Regional/State/Public communications. Marylouise has played a major role in leading the Agency's Customer Service Program and has been instrumental in the effort to implement the *Forging the Links* customer service training program. OPPTS has trained over 97% of its employees, the highest level of participation at EPA Headquarters.

Ms. Uhlig joined EPA in 1974 and has held a number of increasingly senior positions: Chief, Executive Development and Career Systems , Executive Officer to the Administrator, Douglas Costle; Director of Program Management in the Office of solid Waste and Emergency Response; and Special Assistant in Oppts. Prior to joining EPA, Ms Uhlig worked for the Department of the Navy and the Department of Labor, principally in the areas of human resources and communications.

Ms. Uhlig holds a B.A. from Penn State University in Organizational Communications and a M.A. in Public Administration from Central Michigan, and graduated from the Senior Managers in Government Program at Harvard University. She is past President of Federally Employed women, Inc. and presently serves as Chair on the Board of Directors for the Senior Executives Association (SEA). SEA is a professional association representing career executives (Senior Executives and Senior Level employees, and their equivalents) in the federal government. She is the first career employee to receive the "Jim Barnes Human Resources Award" - the highest EPA honor. Marylouise has a daughter who attends the Duke Ellington School for the Arts in Washington, DC. This largely minority institution is one of the premier performing arts high schools in the country and Marylouise has become an active supporter of a variety of school activities, ranging from serving on the parent board to mentoring students.

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PAMELA JOHNSON

Pam Johnson is Deputy Director of the National Partnership for Reinventing Government where she leads Afterschool.gov, the SafeCities Network, and Boost 4 Kids, working with community/state partnerships to improve results for children. She negotiated the first Presidential performance agreements to increase accountability and performance measurement in the executive branch. She established and led a government-wide benchmarking consortium that helped to transform 800 service at the Social Security Administration to be among the best in the business. Pam helped reinvent common services at the State Department and the United nations, and also organized the first reinventing government conference.

Pam spent two years as a change manager at the UN where, as Executive Director of the Efficiency Board, she helped save 10 percent of the UN's budget and led 550 efficiency projects that saved $1 million per year on foreign currency purchases and cut paper use 50 percent. She has worked with private organizations and government agencies to introduce performance measurement into child survival programs in more than 50 countries. She worked with a global coalition to immunize 90 percent of the world's children.

Pam introduced the "electronic UN" that promotes the use of geographic information systems for managing performance and getting results. She promoted a public-private partnership to develop new vaccines, the first non-reusable syringes and other health related technologies at the Agency for International Development. Pam speaks across the nation and to international audiences on reinventing government, and has written speeches for the Vice President and the Secretary General of the UN. She is a prolific writer, a former photo-journalist covering Africa and Asia, and an anthropologist.

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FRANK L. DAVIS

Frank L. Davis, Director, Office of Departmental Operations and Coordination, U.S. Department of Housing Urban Development (HUD), is a senior executive with more than 30 years of professional and managerial experience covering a broad range of policy analysis, strategic planning, program and administrative operations and large-scale organizational analysis..

As Director, Office of Departmental Operations and Coordination, Frank is responsible for planning, coordinating and providing oversight for execution of the Department's management agenda, including strategic planning for budgeting, information technology, human resources, program policies and business and operating plans in HUD headquarters and field offices. He is the senior advisor to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary on planning and implementing the HUD 2020 Management Reform Plan, including major program operation consolidations, reform of procurement and contracting, financial systems integration, new internal control systems, as well as a new business and operating plan system and executive performance accountability plans.

Previously, he was Director of HUD's Field Reorganization Task Force. In this capacity, he planned, developed and coordinated implementation of a new HUD field structure and program operations of the Department. Previously, he served as Acting Regional Administrator, at HUD's Ft. Worth Region. In that role, he administered all HUD grants, mortgage insurance and other programs throughout a network of five states and eleven field offices in the southwest. In addition, Frank Davis has served in senior executive positions in the Office of Community Planning Development, as Director of Field Operations and Monitoring and Deputy Director of Block Grant Assistance. This was preceded by several key assignments in the area of Human Resources Management, as HUD's Director of Personnel; Director, Employee and Labor Relations, Program and Technical Training Coordinator, Chief of Recruitment and Training and National Urban Intern Coordinator. He also served two years as Deputy Director of Personnel at the U.S. General Services Administration.

Frank received his undergraduate degree in Latin American Area Studies from Rutgers University, and completed graduate work in Latin American History at Howard University. He recently completed the Senior Managers in Government program at the JFK School of Harvard University and the Brookings Institution's Executive Seminar. He has received many awards including: Vice President Gore's National Partnership for Reinventing Government hammer Award and the Secretary's Certificate of Merit. Most recently, he received the President's Meritorious Executive Rank Award for 1999.

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GAIL C. CHRISTOPHER

Dr. Gail C. Christopher, D.N., is a licensed naturopath and naprapath. She brings more than twenty-five years of experience as a clinician, administrator and social change agent to her role as Co-Chair, providing direction for the Alliance for Redesigning Government. Gail is also the CEO of a Washington, DC based consulting firm which serves non-profit, corporate and government clients by bringing a holistic perspective to governance and social interventions. She has consulted with senior executives in state and local governments in areas of program design, organizational development, accountability and performance-based governance, equity issues and strategic planning. Over the last twenty years, Gail has created innovations and award winning programs that address such complex issues as economic self-sufficiency for long term welfare recipients; support and re-unification for families involved with abuse and neglect; community building and empowerment to reduce youth violence; micro-enterprise and small business development; and multicultural development for the nation's educators.

Her many executive leadership positions have included: Executive Director of The Family Resource Coalition; National Director of the Americans All National Education Program and Director of the Reverend Jesse Jackson's National Youth Violence Prevention Program. She is an Associate for Program Design and Development for the Information and Services Clearinghouse of the Howard University School of Divinity. Her work with government redesign began in the 1980's, finding innovative ways to link local, state and federal resources with community based nonprofit organizations. She has provided consulting services to the council for Governors' Policy Advisors, The National Governors' Association, the Federal Department of Health and Human Services and to state agencies in more than fifteen states. She is the publisher of the national magazine, the

New Public Innovator and contributing author of the popular handbook for government innovators, "Creating High Performance Government Organizations". She has authored professional publications which have national distribution, as well as a popular trade book for single parent families, entitled, *Anchors for the Innocent*. In 1996, Dr. Christopher was inducted as a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration.

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JIM MAKRIS

Jim Makris joined the EPA in 1985, and oversees the development and implementation of all chemical accident preparedness and prevention programs. In his capacity as Director, he has led efforts to reduce the likelihood and severity of chemical accidents as well reduce environmental risks in general. Jim also coordinates all joint prevention and preparedness efforts with Mexico and Canada, and co-chairs the US/Mexico and US/Canada Joint Response Teams. In addition, he has been instrumental in ensuring coordinated, non-duplicative efforts worldwide in the area of chemical emergency prevention and preparedness through his constant and concerted efforts with the European community and international organizations.

He is a graduate of the University of New Hampshire, and earned a law degree from George Washington University.

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SHELLEY LEVITT

Shelley Levitt currently works in the soon-to-be established Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation. She has been with the Agency since 1990, beginning her career in the Human Resources and Communications field. In recent years Shelley's efforts have focused on as well the evaluation and measurement of program, product, and service effectiveness. Currently, she serves as Chair of EPA's Customer Service Awards and Recognition Workgroup and served as Chair of the Customer Service Program in her former position with the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER).

Shelley is the catalyst for the creation and implementation of a significant monetary award recognizing a OSWER Customer Service Employee of the Year. With Shelley's guidance several organizations Agency-wide have integrated this award into their recognition programs. She is also responsible for directing and guiding her AAship's customer service program.

In addition to Shelley's interest and involvement in Customer Service, work she dedicated considerable effort to establishing national chemical safety goals and determining a common mechanism for evaluating chemical safety program effectiveness nationwide.

Shelley holds a BA in Psychology from the American University in Washington, D.C. She is married, has three children, and lives in Silver Spring, Maryland.

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PEGGY FOSTER

Peggy Foster serves as the Chairman of the Region 6 Customer Service Council in addition to her regular position of Management Analyst to the Division Director in the Superfund Division in Dallas, Texas. As a part of her normal duties, is responsible for overseeing the resources, both dollars and FTE, in addition to the overall administrative processes of the Division. Prior to the last 4 years with Superfund, she spent 27 years with the Water Quality Management Division. She has been with the Agency since 1972.

Peggy has always been interested in customer service in the private sector; so when it became known that the Agency was looking to improve it's customer service, she quickly volunteered to be a part of the core group. She believes in providing good customers service and exceeding the customer's expectations. She strives to motivate and encourage good customer service through incentives and recognition rather than requirement and recrimination.

Peggy holds an Associates Degree in Applied Arts and Sciences. She loves to sew in her spare time and makes most of her own clothes as well as clothes for her family. She loves to read and garden, and spend time on church activities. She is married with two grown daughters and a 2 year old grandson.

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BARRY GOLDFARB

Barry Goldfarb is a Program Analyst with EPA's Office of Research and Development's Management and Administration's Human Resource and Infrastructure Staff. He joined ORD 15 years ago coming from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) where he collaborated in the design, development, implementation and administration of the International Cancer Research Data Bank Program, the Cancerline PDQ Information Data Bases and the International Scientist-to-Scientist Exchange Program. His current responsibilities include ORD program activities such as leading

ORD's Customer Service Council, coordinating its activities and training and awards programs, being alternate to the Executive Secretary for ORD's Human Resources Council, and disseminating and providing guidance on Career Development tools such as CareerPoint Software throughout ORD and Berry also as well as performs administrative activities, such as managing contracts and agreements. Prior to this, he was Director of the Program Operations Staff in the Office of Health and Environmental Assessment.

Barry believes that excellent customer service at all levels of an organization can be stimulated by saying "thank you" in one form or another. He has integrated this belief into the ORD-ORMA Quarterly Customer Service Peer Recognition Nomination Program being presented at this conference.

Barry earned a B.S. and MBA in Business and Finance from the University of Maryland. He enjoys hiking and has traveled extensively throughout the world meeting with other cultures both on behalf of the Government and with his family.

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BETTY WINTER

Betty Winter began working with the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Washington, DC in 1977. Since October 1997, Betty has managed EPA Region 4's efforts to implement Executive Order 12862 on customer service and to focus employees throughout the regional office on their customers' needs. In that capacity, Betty has served on several agency workgroups to promote improved customer service, and leads a region-wide customer service team in the Atlanta office. Betty worked in EPA Headquarters until 1990 in Pesticide Programs, Toxic Substances regulation, Superfund State Involvement and Community Involvement Programs. Betty was a special assistant to the Assistant Administrator for Pesticides and Toxic Substances, focusing on state partnerships and regional operations. Betty organized the first EPA conference on public access to EPA information in 1989. In 1990, Betty joined the Region 4 Superfund Program as a community involvement specialist, serving communities in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi.

Betty sees her role in Region 4 to be that of a change motivator. She continues to try things that others assure her will "never" work in the "regional culture." She has always been interested in people, communication, and public access issues and feels improving customer service allows her to use much of her former experience with EPA.

Betty has a Masters Degree in communication from Auburn University and twenty years experience in environmental regulation and policy development and program management along with 10 years experience in community involvement and outreach. She has two daughters and spends her free time coaching Odyssey of the Mind, serving as a Cheerleading Team Mom, and working as a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) officer.

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LINDA S. HILWIG

Linda Hilwig began at EPA in January 1971. Her current responsibilities include scheduling for the Deputy Administrator; coordinating the Deputy Administrator's participation in meetings and conferences, including speeches and travel; and coordination of day-to-day management of the Immediate Office of the Deputy Administrator. Prior to joining the Deputy Administrator's office, she worked in EPA's Office of International Activities for over 18 years. Linda began her "environmental career" at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, where she worked in the Division of Air Pollution (which later became a part of EPA). She was the first recipient of EPA's Glenda Farmer Award for Professionalism, which she received in December 1992.

Linda joined the Office of the Administrator's Customer Service Work Group when it was established in October 1998. On the Awards Team of that Work Group, she is working to promote recognition of good customer service within the Office of the Administrator. Linda also serves on the Agency Customer Service Steering Committee Awards Sub-group and the Customer Service Correspondence Core Process Group.

Linda enjoys snow skiing, music, movies and the beach. She is an avid sports fan, and can be found at Washington Redskins and Baltimore Orioles games on a regular basis.

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JACK MCHALE

Jack McHale joined the Social Security Administration (SSA) as a Claims Representative trainee at the Jersey City, New Jersey field office. He moved to headquarters and progressed through a variety of assignments which included Computer Programmer and Systems Analyst in the Bureau of data Processing, Bureau of Retirement and Survivors Insurance, and Bureau of Health Insurance.

From 1982 through 1988, Jack served as Director, Office of International Operations. This component serves SSA's 500,000 beneficiaries residing abroad.. He recently served as the Associate Commissioner, Office of Telephone Services which is the focal point for the toll free telephone network serving over 60 million callers annually. Currently, he is Deputy Regional Commissioner for the Philadelphia Region which encompasses Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

Among the honors Jack has received are the SSA's Commissioner's Citation, the Federal Leadership Award and the Hammer Award.

Jack received his bachelor of Science degree from Saint Peter's College, and completed his masters of public administration at the University of Baltimore.

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PATRICIA A. BONNER

Pat Bonner is Customer Service Director for the United States Environmental Protection Agency, a position she's held since August 1996. Her responsibilities include program and policy development, training, feedback and measurement coordination, and encouragement to 11 cross agency committees. Through her extensive networks she works hard to keep those involved or interested in customer service activities informed, positive and motivated to improve EPA's services, products and processes. Pat has worked in the aerospace, oceanography, electronics and advertising industries, as well as county, federal and international government; and been a communications consultant, college instructor, trainer, and the owner of her own business.

Pat has been with EPA since 1984 when she left the State Department in Canada and joined EPA as the Director of Program Management and Communications for the Chesapeake Bay Program in Annapolis, Maryland. Since then, she has been Director of External Affairs in EPA's Seattle Region, on detail to the White House as Director of Outreach and Education for Coastal America, and in the Office of Water where she worked as a policy analyst and developed the first measurement and tracking agreements with all ten regions. EPA and the education community have recognized her with numerous awards for publications and communication excellence, as well as two Silver Medals and a Bronze Medal.

Pat holds a BA from Carnegie Mellon University, and an MS from Renssalear Polytechnic Institute. On a more personal note, Pat designs and makes jewelry, enjoys jazz music and old movies, and has traveled to nearly 80 countries and all 50 states.

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KAREN V. BROWN

Karen has been with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) since 1981 holding a series of management positions, working with the Administrator, the Deputy Administrator, and the Assistant Administrator for Solid Waste and Emergency Response. Previously, she held increasingly responsible jobs as a Chemist & Environmental Health Specialist with the Environmental Health Administration of the District of Columbia, Washington, DC.

She holds a bachelor of Science Degree from the University of the District of Columbia and has done graduate work in Environmental Science at George Washington University and completed a number of special management-type training programs in the past few years.

She was appointed to the position of Small Business Ombudsman by the Administrator, Lee M. Thomas, on June 24, 1985. On April 4, 1988, she was named the Agency's Asbestos Ombudsman in addition to her Small Business duties.

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AUDREY T. BORJA

Audrey Borja serves as a Senior Analyst with the Office of Regulatory Affairs, Food and Drug Administration. As part of the Performance Results Staff, a high percentage of Audrey's time is working Vice President Gore's National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR) staff in carrying out various initiatives for the Vice President. For example, capturing best practices across the public and private sectors, balancing performance measures, identifying and eliminating government burdens, reinvention laboratories, hammer awards, and sponsoring a sound and effective approach to customer service. Audrey leads and serves on numerous agencies' task grops designed to implement the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 and the customer service executive order. She conducts studies and projects and carries out initiatives to promote reinvention and better ways of doing business.

Audrey plans and directs an Interagency Regulatory Reinvention Forum with over 20 member agencies with interest in better understanding the regulatory role in reinvention while meeting the requirements of Congress and the Administration. Audrey is one of a small team of change agents representing the regulatory affairs responsibilities of the FDA.

Audrey holds a BA in Sociology from the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, Pa. and a MPA in Public Administration from the Pennsylvania State University, College Park, Pa. Audrey has exceptional people skills, enjoys her work, her active lifestyle, and a variety of recreation including dancing, jogging and fishing. Audrey believes in good customer service!

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MICHAEL J. BINDER

Michael J. Binder is Special Assistant to the Assistant Inspector General for Audit, Office of Inspector General, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Michael began his career in 1973 as an auditor for the U.S. General Accounting Office, became a strategic planning and evaluation specialist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and went back to auditing and fraud prevention with the HUD OIG, before joining the EPA OIG as an Office Director and Controller.

He has BBA and MBA degrees from the George Washington University, has attended Harvard University, Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, the Federal Executive Institute, and is a Certified Internal Auditor and Certified Fraud Examiner. He created the Montgomery Summer Tennis Camps, has been a part-time Associate Professor of Economics, Finance and Management for 20 years and a member of the USDA Graduate School faculty, has published several course books and professional articles, and is a professional orchestra leader.

Michael, formerly the Director of Resources Management and the Senior Budget Officer for the OIG, currently is the coordinator for the OIG's Government Performance and Results Act implementation and customer & market focus efforts. He has developed and teaches courses in communications and analysis and presentation of data for selling ideas to become an effective change agent.

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TONI LENANE

In her current position, Toni Lenane is a member of SSA's executive staff and is the Agency's champion for world class service and advocate for change. As SSA is faced with sharply increasing workloads and diminishing resources, she is focusing on helping the Agency reinvent itself to integrate the "customer as driver" perspective in all SSA business and to maximize cost-effectiveness.

She serves as SSA's focus point and liaison to the National Partnership for Reinventing Government, and is directing implementation activities on several federal "Reinventing Government" initiatives approved by the White House.

Toni brings to her position a wealth of Social Security experience. She has served in virtually every major functional area within the Agency, including operations, systems, quality appraisal, and policy. Ms. Lenane led the conversion of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) from State programs to a federal one administered by SSA. She led SSA's implementation of the Immigration Reform Control Act of 1986. She eventually became the Director of the Office of Assistance Payments, with jurisdiction over all aspects of SSI. In her ascent through SSA management, Ms. Lenane became the Deputy Associate Commissioner of Retirement and Survivors Insurance and later the Agency's first Chief Policy Officer. She also supervised the development and implementation of SSA's widely acclaimed Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement, now called the Social Security Statement.

Toni's talents and contributions have been recognized on numerous occasions through Commissioner's Citations and Secretary of Health and Human Services awards. She is the recipient of a Presidential Executive Rank Award and in the summer of 1994 Vice President Gore personally presented her with the "Hammer Award" in recognition of her superb direction of SSA's

"World Class Service" initiative.

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JEAN VENABLE

Ms. Venable has been part of the SSA "family" for 24 years and currently works in SSA's Office of Customer Service Integration—a small office that reports directly to the Commissioner of Social Security. Her responsibilities in that office include: coordinating agency-wide customer service initiatives; recommending customer service enhancements based on what the Agency learns from customer surveys and focus groups; helping to integrate the "customer-as-driver" perspective into all of SSA's business; encouraging innovation to enable the Agency to be customer-responsive most efficiently and effectively.

Jean works very closely with the Vice President's National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR) and manages the implementation of several high-level NPR initiatives for SSA relating to customer service and reinvention.

Prior to working in the area of customer service, Jean served many years as a mid-level manager in SSA's Office of Disability. In that capacity, she directed programs to encourage people with disabilities to return to work in spite of their disabilities. She worked closely with State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies to provide opportunities for SSA's disability beneficiaries to get the help they need to return to the workforce.

Jean received her BA in art history from the University of Maryland, College Park.

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GEORGE WALKER

George Walker has served EPA for 14 years. His current responsibilities include both administrative activities, such as managing contracts and interagency agreements, and program activities including coordinating training, committee meetings, and national conferences. George became interested in environmental issues in the early 70's while teaching earth science and biology. He has been an environmental technician in the paper industry and an environmental engineer with the Tennessee Valley Authority. He coordinated NEPA environmental assessment activities with the Bureau of Reclamation and managed grants to clean up the Chesapeake Bay. Before moving into customer service, he designed and managed EPA's environmental education grants program.

George believes that the willingness of people to ask, interpret and act on feedback from others is essential in providing excellent customer service at all levels of an organization. Once the willingness is there, a consistent method of inquiry is needed to establish baselines and trends--and to track progress against adopted goals. He has focused recently on leading the development of the EPA customer service feedback guidelines, "Hearing the Voice of the Customer." He has coordinated development of a feedback advisors program and promoted use of user-friendly survey software to reduce feedback costs.

George holds a BA in Geography from Middlebury College in Vermont and an MS in Science Education from Western Connecticut State Teachers College. He enjoys playing golf and sailing and going to movies with his four sons. He also enjoys simply being part of and observing the natural world.

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JOHN KAVALIUNIS

Now involved in his fourth census, John Kavaliunas is responsible for managing activities that increasing the public's awareness, access, and use of Census Bureau products and services. The Marketing Services Office is a focal point for activities related to customer service and measuring customer satisfaction with Census Bureau programs and products.

His prior experience at the Census Bureau included directing a national training program for data users and developing campaigns for informing the public about Census Bureau products. He also worked with state and local dissemination networks, coordinated user input into the 1990 census questionnaire and products, and carried out research on uses of information. He received the Department of Commerce's Bronze Medal Award for Superior Federal Service in 1987.

John holds BS and MA degrees from Georgetown University and served in the Peace Corps in Northeastern Brazil.

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HEATHER CASE

Heather Case has been with the Environmental Protection Agency for 3 years. She currently is the Project Leader of the EPA national telephone survey to identify the public's environmental information needs. In this current position she administers a survey contract, oversees the design and analysis of the survey data, and presents progress reports to management and other Agency stakeholders.

Heather came to the USEPA after five years with Exxon Biomedical Sciences in East Millstone, NJ. At Exxon, she monitored pre-clinical mammalian and non-mammalian toxicology studies for quality and compliance with federal regulations. She first became interested in biology as a youth growing up in rural upstate New York. She holds a BS in Biology from Rutgers University and obtained a MPH in environmental health from Rutgers University part-time while she was working at Exxon.

Heather is an avid hiker and enjoys getting away to the Shenandoah Mountains and other natural resources.

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JUDY B. TOMASO

Judy Tomaso's Federal career began as a revenue officer for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Working in both the Connecticut-Rhode Island and New England Districts. She moved to Washington, DC and held a series of analytical, staff, and management positions in the Collection and Planning organizations. She eventually became the Executive Assistant to the Chief Financial Officer. Judy moved to the Southeast Region in 1990 as Executive Assistant to the Regional Commissioner and was selected into the Executive Development Program in 1993. She became Assistant Director of the Andover Service Center after completion of the Executive Development Program. In 1995, she was appointed as National Director of Communications. In August of 1997, she was selected as Assistant to the Deputy Commissioner. Ms. Tomaso is currently the Program Executive, Taxpayer Treatment and Service Improvements. In this position in the customer-focused IRS, she is responsible for providing executive direction and leadership for the implementation service improvement recommendations.

Judy is a graduate of Smith College and is married to Bruce Tomaso.

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JAMES R. JONES

Jim Jones entered Federal Service in June 1975 as a project engineer. He has served as the Assistant Area Engineer and Area Engineer at the Aberdeen Area Office, as Action officer in the Construction Policy Branch and was Deputy Chief of the Engineering and Construction Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Washington, DC just prior to reporting to the Baltimore District as the Deputy District Engineer for Programs and Project Management and Chief of the Program and Project Management Division in September 1998.

Jim holds a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering degree from the University of Maryland. He has been honored with the Dispute Resolution Award from the CPR Institute and the Society of American Engineers Young Engineer Award.

His interests include fishing, sailing, home renovating, mechanics and biking.

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THOMAS C. VOLTAGGIO

Mr. Voltaggio was born in Queens, New York, and received his Bachelor's Degree in Chemical Engineering in 1968 from the City College of New York. He was employed by Stauffer Chemical Company from 1968-1971 as the Plant Engineer at their Houston, Texas and Fort Worth, Texas sulfuric acid plants. In 1971, he received a Masters Degree in Management Science from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. Tom joined the U.S. EPA in July of 1971, in the Dallas, Texas regional office as an engineer in the NPDES permit program. In 1973, he joined the Chicago regional office as the head of NPDES compliance and then as the Chief of the Engineering Section dealing with air pollution enforcement.

In 1977, he relocated to the Philadelphia office as the Chief of the Air Enforcement Branch. From 1977 to 1991, he supervised many of the various components of the hazardous waste program in Region III, including managing the Superfund program from its inception. In January of 1991, he became Director of the Hazardous Waste Management Division responsible for all aspects of the Superfund, Resource Conservation and Recovery (RCRA), and Underground Storage Tank (UST) programs. In May, 1998 he became Deputy Regional Administrator of Region III, responsible for all environmental programs in the Mid-Atlantic Region of EPA.

He has significant experience in training and assisting foreign governments in the development and implementation of hazardous waste programs. He has advised the governments of Italy, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, India, Thailand, Korea and Taiwan.

He is married with three children and resides in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, where he spends his spare time building computers and surfing the Internet.

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TIMOTHY FIELDS, JR.

Tim Fields was nominated by President Clinton to be Assistant Administrator for EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) on October 9, 1998. He was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on July 1, 1999. He had been Acting Assistant Administrator since February 17, 1997. Prior to this, he served as Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for OSWER for about three years.

As Assistant Administrator, he is responsible for the national oversight and management of the Superfund, Brownfields, Hazardous and Solid Waste Management, Underground Storage Tanks, Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention, Technology Innovation, Oil Spills Cleanup, and Federal Facilities Site Remediation Programs. He also served as Director of EPA's Superfund Revitalization Office for 2 ½ years, Deputy Director of EPA's Office of Emergency and Remedial Response for 2 ½ years, Director of EPA's Emergency Response Division for 4 ½ years, and as Deputy Director of the Hazardous Site Control Division (EPA's Superfund Remedial Program) for 1 ½ years. Tim has also held a variety of supervisory and staff positions in the Office of Mobile Sources and Office of Solid Waste. Since September 1997, he has also served as Chair of the EPA Human Resources Council. He has been employed by EPA in a variety of positions for more than 28 years.

Tim has a B.S. Degree in Industrial Engineering from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), an M.S. Degree in Operations Research from George Washington University, and an additional year of graduate studies at Ohio State University.

Following graduation from Virginia Tech, Tim served for 2 ½ years in the U.S. Public Health Service as a Commissioned Officer. His major awards include four (4) Presidential Rank Awards (the 1993 and 1998 Presidential Rank Awards for Distinguished Executive Service, 1989 and 1996 Presidential Rank Awards for Meritorious Executive Service), an EPA Silver Medal, three EPA Bronze Medals, and several other awards for outstanding executive performance.

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DOUG KRUG

Doug Krug is co-author of the best-selling book, *Enlightened Leadership: Getting to the HEART of Change* (Simon & Schuster). In its 18th printing, the book is used as a text book in numerous colleges and universities, as well as corporate and government leadership development and change management programs. Doug is on the faculty of the MBA Program at

Johns Hopkins University, and Guest Faculty at the U. S. Office of Personnel Management - Western Management Development Center, the Clinical Leadership Institute at the Veteran's Administration, and the Leadership Forum at the FBI Academy.

Doug brings broad experience from having worked with executive teams in many facets of the public and private sectors. This includes: Hewlett-Packard, Unisys, FBI, Lockheed-Martin, Bell Atlantic, Reynolds Metals, GTE, BellSouth, USDA, Ericsson, Junior Achievement, Lucent Technologies, Sprint PCS, Texaco, Georgia-Pacific, General Electric, Battelle Institute, Alcon Laboratories, MCI WorldCom, NASA, U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, PPG Industries, U. S. Navy, U. S. Forest Service, U. S. Department of Education, Boeing, U. S. Coast Guard, and the EPA. In addition, Doug has been a featured speaker at Vice President Al Gore's Conference on Re-Inventing Government for the last two years.

Doug's primary role and greatest strength is working with top executive teams in helping them prepare for the challenges ahead; especially in assuring a successful future for their organizations. The essence of Doug's work is built around the premise that the core of what makes a leader can not be taught, not in the traditional training sense; it has to be brought out from within. One of Doug's greatest strengths is his ability to facilitate people in discovering answers for themselves and bringing out their best.

Doug provides inspiration and information, giving participants tools that are immediately applicable in every walk of life. Groups actively participate in their own discovery through simple yet powerful exercises. Change is successfully being implemented by scores of organizations and thousands of people who have experienced this profound process.

Doug has an engaging personality. People relate to the personal conviction he brings to the process of self-discovery. His career as an entrepreneur and management consultant provide him with proven skills for effectively creating life changing shifts in the perspective of others in a short amount of time.

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January 11, 2000

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Customer Service at EPA

FROM: EPA's Customer Service Program Staff

TO: Participants at EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference and Other Colleagues

On November 30 and December 1, 1999, 217 of us from every EPA program office and nine of the ten EPA regional offices met in Philadelphia for EPA's Second National Customer Service Conference. Eighty-five people from other federal and state agencies and the private sector joined us as we talked about ways to improve the service that EPA delivers to its customers.

Our discussions focused on values and expectations, hard-won experience at EPA and other agencies, and approaches to organizational change. The discussions made it clear that we have progressed in many areas since last year's conference and that customer service is getting higher level attention at EPA. Acting Deputy Administrator Mike McCabe, Assistant Administrator Tim Fields, Associate Administrator Rick Farrell and Acting Regional Administrator Tom Voltaggio addressed our meeting, along with many other EPA staff representing all major offices and occupational levels. In addition, Charles Jeffress (the head of OSHA), senior staff from ten other federal agencies, Mark Coleman (Executive Director of the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality), and senior staff from Oklahoma and two other state agencies spoke to our group, as did two professors, a journalist and two consultants. Participants from other agencies came because they recognized that this conference is a unique opportunity to learn from leaders in public sector customer service.

We are sending this memo to you to share ten of the most important points that emerged both explicitly and implicitly from the conference. Different offices provide different customers with different services, but the ten points below apply uniformly to the entire agency. We have posted notes on the conference at http://www.epa.gov/customerservice/conference.htm and are also preparing proceedings, which should be available on the site in several weeks.

Ten Points from the Conference

1. *Customer service must be and in fact is becoming more of a core value in EPA and other agencies.* This is happening best where top management at EPA and other agencies has made service to external and internal customers a priority, and indeed a way of planning and evaluating the agency's work. As several speakers emphasized, customer service must be "an attitude, not an add-on" (or, as they say in Philadelphia, an "addytude"). Senior EPA officials delivered a very clear message about the high priority they place on improving customer service.

2. *Customer service at EPA needs to move from tactical approaches, such as telephone/voicemail improvement, to strategic approaches involving system changes.* We are making excellent progress in several areas such as telephone and voicemail practices, being

prompt and polite, etc., but experience at other agencies (e.g. HUD, IRS, FDA, SSA) indicates that more far-reaching and lasting improvements usually require rethinking the whole process through which we provide services. Our focus on a vision and goals for environmental improvement combined with our customer service strategy gives us a platform to think in these terms. During times of flat or declining budgets, focusing on what our customers value most dearly is a powerful management tool.

3. *World class customer service requires that we delight our customers.* As the two professors who addressed us explained, a satisfied customer is one whose need is addressed or whose problem is solved. A delighted customer enjoys the same results and has been dignified in the process. Delighting customers begins with people in an organization who clearly understand their mission and share their commitment to the service they intend to provide, and continues with respect for the customers and systems that fully support those who actually deliver service.

4. *We need to listen to our customers and understand what they expect and need.* There are many ways to listen, as quite a few speakers from EPA and other agencies emphasized: surveys, focus groups, advisory committees, public meetings, interpreting diverse forms of qualitative feedback, taking the time to understand customer complaints, using online access, and responding to direct public and Congressional pressure. People tend to have high expectations of government, but they are also able to understand and accept many of the complexities that agencies face. Frequently we have multiple, conflicting missions that make it impossible to please all of our customers, but we still need to demonstrate that we understand and care about what they are seeking and to respect them. As taxpayers they generally want to know that government spends their money effectively to do things right the first time, even if it means making an investment to improve service delivery.

5. *Our customers also want to hear from us.* Many speakers from EPA and other agencies spoke of the emphasis they place on sharing information with others who need it. The Internet has become a widely used tool - so widely used that we need to focus more on how to help customers find the particular information that they need. Agencies are also finding, sometimes through research, that for some purposes the Internet is not a good communications medium, at least not yet. Several speakers also pointed out that we need to concentrate more on our internal communication - you cannot give accurate and consistent external messages if those inside the organization have widely differing ideas of the organizational goals and how to achieve them.

6. *Customer service frequently depends on establishing solid partnerships.* Speakers from OSHA, HUD and New Jersey made a major point about partnering to improve customer service. Expanding agency mandates and serious budget pressures often make it imperative to join forces with other federal, state, local and private organizations. To be successful, such partnerships must focus explicitly on the ultimate service to customers that all the partners want to provide.

7. *Benchmark the leaders and measure your progress.* Benchmark the best, regardless of what business they are in. The Mid-Atlantic region of the Social Security Administration did this and now its telephone service is top rated - better than several private sector firms that are well known for excellent service. They know this because they have measured it and they have shown that what gets measured gets done. EPA's Customer Service Staff can assist offices that are ready to measure service delivery.

8. *Improving customer service often means helping staff to acquire new skills.* This is particularly the case when organizations shift strategies and job responsibilities, as HUD and IRS

have done. Even in less dramatic situations, training is often very important to help people recognize and meet customer needs. EPA has a variety of workshops available. The Customer Service Program presented several of them before and after the conference.

9. *Recognize and reward outstanding customer service.* The top EPA managers who spoke and several managers from other agencies emphasized their commitment on this point. The EPA Customer Service Awards Committee panel presentation described the progress that different offices and regions are making to recognize and reward outstanding customer service. However, progress is uneven across the agency. They also described the new agencywide Customer Service Honor Award, created by the EPA Awards Board, which will first be presented a year from now. The Awards Group will be hosting a workshop to showcase current awards and plan further refinements to the agency's award and recognition program. The group welcomes participation from all EPA organizations.

10. *Meaningful organizational change must be the responsibility of everyone in the organization.* Much has already been done to improve customer service at EPA, but more work remains. Several speakers noted the need for continuous improvement, and another remarked that "you don't have to be sick to get better." Discussing the importance and difficulty of changing organizational culture, speakers offered a variety of approaches: ask the right questions to get the right answers, focus on what is going well and build on success (get "on a roll" and stay there), set priorities, give people permission to experiment, communicate with colleagues and persevere.

For further information on this conference or the EPA Customer Service Program, please contact Patricia Bonner, Director of Customer Service (202-260-0599) or George Walker, Deputy Director of Customer Service (202-260-9144), both in the HQ Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation (OPEI).

One final note. The Customer Service Program presented two "Just Do It Customer Service Leadership Awards" at this conference. One was to Shelley Levitt, formerly of OSWER and now of OPEI, for her work in chairing the Customer Service Awards Committee. The other was to the Region 3 Customer Service team, headed by Larry Teller, for their outstanding job as EPA's Lead Region for Customer Service during the past two years, and for all they did to ensure the success of the Second EPA National Customer Service Conference, including a fine introduction to Philadelphia's unique culture at the Mummers Museum.