

New Hanover County Customer Service Committee Meeting Notes 2/20/2008

Members in Attendance:

Tracy Dawson	Jennifer Hardison	Harry Tuchmayer	Christine McNamee
Linda Augino	Andre' Mallette	Mark Boyer	Barbara Hoffman
Audrey Burgess	Jane O'Brien		

Summary:

- Barbie Hoffman brought the committee members candy “carrots” to kick off the recognition program.
- Welcomed Audrey Burgess from Property Management to the Committee.
- Received update on handbook progress and passed sample around for review. We were able to incorporate many of the ideas that everyone had including the sunrise, notes sections and employee photos. We will be able to use this as a tool for the Speakers Bureau presentation. This is our first version and it can be changed as we go if needed. We owe Henry Chisholm a gratitude of thanks for his graphic assistance in the handbook.
- Discussed everyday examples of customer service.
 - Jennifer Hardison had a meeting at the Ogden Firehouse. Firefighter Matt Saunders came back from a call and immediately began assisting them. He was very attentive and accommodating even when receiving another call.
 - The Library hosted the Eastern Regional Librarians Workshop for the Summer Reading Club. The theme this year is “Catch the Reading Bug.” One of the staff members found a recipe for cooking worms. She cured them, prepared them and actually ate a worm for the kick off to get everyone excited about the event.
 - Danny Singletary was commended for his assistance with the Human Relations Fair in the atrium at the Government Center. Nick Rhodes, a member of the Human Relations Commission and the School Board, said they couldn't have done it without his help. Andre' Mallette told Jerome Fennel about this with Danny present to recognize his outstanding customer service.
 - Anthony Williams of Animal Control responded within minutes to a call that pit bull puppies were being sold out of the back of a truck. He was very professional in a difficult situation. Jane O'Brien who observed this wrote a letter to Jean McNeil and Bruce Shell to recognize him.
- Discussed Cape Fear Community College's Disney's Approach to Customer Service workshop.
 - The training had many good points and examples.
 - One idea was the 10 foot rule, which is strategically placing people within 10 feet of each other so they are accessible to customers. This helps build relationships with customers.
 - The Library is looking into new technology that will allow staff to be more mobile and assessable to customers while providing the same level of service as at the desk.

- Social Services has discussed the need to redesign their lobby to have a more central waiting area. There are currently four different waiting areas, which causes confusion to some clients and additional wait time if the person is in the wrong area.
 - There are rules, but we can look at ways to work together to come up with a solution that fits everybody's needs; our rules and their purpose.
 - Automated payment centers as part of our e government initiative, has also been discussed. This would allow customers to pay several different bills at one central location.
- Another topic at the Disney seminar was knowing your competition. We are judged by every other transaction a customer has ever had. People expect a certain level of service based on their experiences at other establishments.
- Discusses recognition
 - Andy Atkinson has presented a report and we have already done some initial work on the "RISE to Excellence" Award
 - The Library has developed a recognition program called Starfish. Cards are available for employees to fill out when they catch someone in the act of providing customer service. The cards are gathered up once a month and everyone who received one gets recognized. An e-mail is sent to the supervisor of everyone who received a card and then an e-mail is sent to the staff member summarizing what they did. Once a month there is a drawing and the winner receives a small gift card. There is a group of employees who have volunteered to review the cards for a larger award that will be given every six months. It has gotten employees interested and paying attention to what other employees are doing. It is important to follow up and make sure recognition is timely so the program is sustained.
 - The Library also has a separate comment card for customers.
 - DSS also has a quarterly external customer service survey. They type up all the comments and give to supervisors to recognize positive comments and to work on anything negative. Letters from customers are also copied and placed in their board book, which is sent out to the board members and a copy is kept in the employee lounge.
 - It was suggested that each department could initiate their own recognition program that would work best for them. From there, the employees who had been recognized would move onto a higher level countywide award.
 - For a recognition program to be a success, people need to feel that it's consistent and fair. At the department level, any customer service act can be recognized, but for the higher level award, there will be a stricter criteria.
 - Recognition programs can be tailored by each department. The reward isn't as important as the recognition.
 - Negatives are departments that don't participate, but this could be solved by making the development of a recognition program part of Department Heads work plan. Smaller departments could also face some obstacles.
 - If an employee wanted to recognize an employee from another department, they could send an e-mail or call their supervisor to make sure the employee is

recognized in that department's recognition program. This makes it more personal and immediate from a person that matters.

- It was decided that this would start on a grassroots level. Each department will come up with some kind of recognition program in a manner they feel best fits their department. This will be a starting point for the larger recognition program.
 - The employees, not the Department Heads, should come up with the program and criteria.
 - At the department level the program will be more about fun and reinforcing the good customer service we are looking for. We don't want to overcomplicate the program.
 - We could give a certificate, post pictures and stories on intranet and use monitors to show employees.
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- The first presentation of the Speakers Bureau will be in the next few weeks. Lloyd Prince and Jennifer Hardison will be the first to do their presentation. We will invite the Committee to participate and provide feedback.

 - March 17th is the last scheduled Cultural Competency workshop. We will look at the other training topics at the next meeting and decide what we will be rolling out next. There have been several requests for a class on diffusing difficult situations. We could contact the Domestic Violence Shelter and the Sheriffs Department for training programs.

Action Items:

1. Andre' Mallette will send e-mail to Department Heads explaining recognition program and requesting that they develop their own program and send details of plan back to Andre'.
2. Committee members will discuss recognition plan with their departments.
3. Tracy will bring training program topics to next meeting for discussion.

Next Meeting:

Date: April 9th, 2008

Time: 3:00 – 4:30 PM

Place: The Auditorium at the Arboretum