

New Hanover County Customer Service Committee Meeting Notes 09/09/2009

Members in Attendance:

Tracy Dawson	Tony Roberts	Angelina Bernard	Jane O'Brien
Dennis Ihnat	Jennifer MacNeish	Lisa Bohne	Leslie Stanfield
Andre' Mallette	Carl Byrd	Kellie Daughtry	Kim Roane
Tammy Baggett			

Summary:

- Approved 7/8/2009 meeting notes.
- Discussed everyday examples of customer service.
 - An example of customer service that could be improved happened at a local phone store. Customers had an option to choose sales or service assistance. After waiting over an hour, the customer realized that none of the people waiting for service had been helped, while customers who had just entered the store for sales were being waited on. When asked, an employee said that it was their policy to take all sales customers first, no matter how long a service customer had been waiting. After leaving and going to another store, the customer found out that this was not company policy and received much better service.
 - Discussed how one phone company dropped many new customers after a merger because they called customer service too often.
 - Discussed the difference between corporate and independent stores and how service can differ.
 - From refilling drinks to their children's events and saying "my pleasure," Chick-Fil-A has raised the level of service of fast food.
 - Their customer service model can be studied.
 - Discussed how Lawanda Thompson of Property Management worked there and has carried that work ethic to NHC.
 - New Hanover Regional Medical Center recently provided great customer service. All areas including admitting, nursing staff and food services were very pleasant. The hospital started their customer service initiative a few years ago and have come a long way in providing better service.
 - The Library is planning its staff development day and many other departments have exhibited internal service excellence by contributing items to be given to employees.
 - The IT Department worked diligently to set up streaming video for the County Manager's town hall meeting. A vendor had previously been contacted, but was going to be very expensive and they were not sure they could provide the service in time. IT took the initiative to find a way to do it and provided streaming video when needed.
 - This is the first month the Register of Deeds office has accepted credit cards. IT was very instrumental in providing this much welcomed service to customers.
 - A couple came into the Government Center looking for the Register of Deeds office. An employee called to see if they provided the service the couple needed and was able to conduct the entire transaction over the phone, saving the customers a trip downtown.
- Discussed the Change Management Workshops being conducted by members of Management Team.
 - The key theme of the County Manager's town hall meeting was service and becoming one county as an example of service to other counties. These follow up meetings have provided a chance for employees to come together with the chance to talk and leave with a more positive outlook.

- There has been very positive feedback from these sessions. Employees have been able to discuss their concerns and provide positive solutions. One employee commented that the session was therapeutic.
 - There has been good participation and engagement. Employees have been eager to be involved and be a part of this dialogue.
 - Several factors affected the decision to have this type of open forum. The first was previous suggestions by the Customer Service Committee and presented at Management Team to increase communication. The committee had said employees don't necessarily need all of the answers, but they do need open lines of communication. Subsequently, a Management Roundtable Seminar was the impetus for the Change Management workshops.
 - A consultant, who provided their services pro bono, conducted this seminar and then spoke with Management Team, who believed this was the way to communicate to employees.
 - The County Manager listened to these suggestions and the town hall meeting idea was born.
 - The key to keeping people engaged is following through with these ideas in an atmosphere of trust.
 - The sessions are not mandatory, but employees are highly encouraged to attend. As more employees have come back and praised the workshops, more employees will attend.
 - This is a chance to let employees know the method that went into the decision-making process.
- Discussed the charge of customer service to bring service to the forefront and help convey the County Manager's message on a larger scale.
 - Other priorities have shifted some of the focus away from customer service, but now we will be able to devote more time and effort to this important initiative and gain back the momentum.
 - In the past, we had training to take customer service to a common level, but the current budget constraints have slowed training down.
 - The InterTrainers are a group of county employees who have volunteered to present countywide training.
 - The RISE to Excellence Award and Celebrating Achievements is a way to get employees excited about recognizing what other people are doing.
 - It is important to recognize more than just stars. Even people doing their job need to be recognized because without them, daily operations would stop.
 - Discussed ideas to learn more about other departments and the advantage of knowing about each other's jobs.
 - Videos and facilitated monthly open houses were two ideas to achieve this knowledge.
 - Other ideas included featuring one employee a month and featuring their department and their job duties.
 - Another suggestion was to attend other department's staff meetings to learn more about their job duties.

Action Items:

1. Encourage coworkers to attend Change Management sessions. (all)
2. Work to engage your department in customer service initiative and as a member of one county. (all)
3. Encourage and seek out opportunities to recognize other employees. (all)

Next Meeting:

Date: October 14th, 2009

Time: 3:00 – 4:30 PM