



Case Studies of
**Customer
Service**

Compiled by Steve Glazner

CENTRAL OREGON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Bend, Oregon

Submitted by Mike Beaulieu, Campus Services

Operations Supervisor



SNOW REMOVAL FOR DISABLED STUDENTS, STAFF, AND FACULTY

Located on the eastern flanks of the Oregon Cascades mountain range, Central Oregon Community College (COCC) certainly gets its fair share of wintry weather—multiple days/weeks of cold and deep snows. These weather conditions alone can present snow removal challenges. Add to that the fact that the main Bend campus is located on the side of a 400-foot-high butte, and you've got a recipe for disaster if removal operations are not handled smoothly.

Campus Services is responsible for snow clearing on almost 8 miles of roads, over 500,000 square feet of parking, 7 miles of sidewalks and stairs, and 65,000 square feet of patios. This is accomplished by following a comprehensive snow removal plan created in 2015, which utilizes a series of maps and charts that assign equipment to prioritized areas of the college.

A dedicated approach to maintaining clearance at all 78 ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) parking spots throughout campus is one of our top priorities. We have a skidsteer with a blower attachment as well as a newly purchased four-wheel drive Gator equipped with a blade. These are assigned to the ADA spots. Plowing of these areas begins as soon as we receive 2 feet of snow. Adjacent access ramps to sidewalks are cleared by hand if necessary. We take great pride in providing quick and easy access to everyone at COCC regardless of weather conditions or access needs. ■

According to the 2016 APPA Thought Leaders report, *Remaking the Facilities Organization*, “Most colleges and universities do not traditionally think of themselves as being in the business of customer service...Most of us immediately recognize excellent customer service when we experience it, but few of us spend enough time thinking about what goes into that experience. Superior customer service doesn't happen by accident.”

Everyone involved in the campus facilities management, operations, and capital construction operations is responsible for building strong customer service and customer expectations throughout the college, university, or school. Following are a few examples of the thoughtful, innovative, and meaningful ways in which the facilities organization has improved customer service and built relationships at their institutions.



QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY

Hamden, Connecticut

Submitted by Keith Woodward, Associate Vice President of Facilities

HIRING FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS

Hiring for skill is critical and vitally important, but never underestimate the value of working with the customer (i.e., student, faculty, staff, trustee, or visitor). I believe it starts with the interview process, where you ask relevant customer-service questions such as, “How do you handle difficult people?” While this is surely important, I also believe it’s equally necessary to assess the attitude of the individual you are interviewing.

In his article “Hire for Attitude, Train for Skill,” (*Harvard Business Review*, February 2011), Bill Taylor writes that successful business cultures “all understand that you can’t create something special, distinctive, and compelling in the marketplace unless you build something special, distinctive, and compelling in the workplace. And the best way to build something special in the workplace is to hire for attitude and train for skill.”

For example, if we were to hire an electrician at Quinnipiac University, we would be looking for either an E-1 (contractor level) or E-2 level employee. Most candidates come to the interview with the necessary skills for the job, but I believe you must use the interview process to find the electrician who would provide the best customer service. That goal is paramount to the success of the campus culture and our operations. ■



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA DAVIS

Davis, California

Submitted by Kyle Asire, Territory Manager, Western Region, Gordian

SWATTING ZIKA: 90 DAYS TO RENOVATE THE LAB

Within the walls of the UC Davis Biosafety Level 3 laboratories, cutting-edge research is underway into the Zika virus and the ecology and evolution of disease-causing viruses transmitted by mosquitoes. Just prior to 2016, the university learned that these crucial labs would have to be temporarily reconfigured to accommodate stricter guidelines. If these guidelines were not met, UC Davis risked losing the research grant to another university. They were given a 90-day window.

UC Davis immediately went to work planning the renovations and quickly discovered that the short time frame posed a potential pitfall for completing the project on schedule. To combat this issue, the university utilized a Job Order Contracting solution, an alternative construction procurement method that establishes local, competitively bid prices up front for an indefinite number of projects. This upfront contract enabled UC Davis to increase collaboration with the awarded contractors, so construction could begin faster.

Ultimately, the renovations were completed within the 90-day window, allowing UC Davis to keep its grant. This resulted in the laboratories providing groundbreaking progress to help the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) contain and limit the effects of the Zika virus on the United States, possibly averting an extensive outbreak throughout the nation. ■



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco, California

Submitted by Jodi Soboll, Director of Infrastructure and Utilities Services, UCSE, and Meredith Hargreaves, Senior Lean Practitioner, Haley & Aldrich, Inc.

FACILITIES INVESTMENT NEEDS: STARTING WITH THE CUSTOMER

In June 2016, UCSF's Facilities Services department faced a vexing problem. It identified annual Facilities Investment Needs (FIN), but the data had historically been inconsistent and unpredictable, leading to last-minute changes, incompleteness in the list, and occasionally, costly "active failure." This was frustrating to Facilities and its customers. The Infrastructure, Utilities and Energy Management Group within Facilities attempted to change this.

Key customers and stakeholders participated in a workshop using Lean to develop a shared understanding of whom the list was serving, what the process (and its problems) were, and how to improve things. Together, they created a well-defined process for developing a complete and reliable FIN list with the right amount of detail from customers. Since then, the team has implemented the process, and it's proving to be effective.

Patti Mitchell, associate director of capital programs, says, "The new process has delivered a much more complete FIN list with additional information not previously provided. The new information allows for a thorough review, [done] quickly and completely." By having a stable process that proactively engages customers, the university will avoid liabilities, decrease unscheduled maintenance, and shorten the list, thereby increasing customer satisfaction. Thus far, it has been a successful customer-driven experiment. ■



UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

Boulder, Colorado

Submitted by Curt Huetson, P.E., RPA, FMA, Director of Facilities Planning, Operations and Project Management

HFS CULTURE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

Housing Facilities Services (HFS) is a service organization at the University of Colorado Boulder that is devoted to customer satisfaction. To support this, HFS sends an email survey to customers after each work order is completed to ensure they are satisfied with the work, technicians, and timeliness of the repairs. HFS has a 92 percent satisfaction rate; below are examples of the positive comments from customers:

"Technicians were very timely, identified and fixed the problem quickly, and were very kind. An excellent experience overall."

"Everything is in even better condition than it was before it broke!"

Yet HFS goes the extra step to ensure that all customers are satisfied with their living and/or working areas by personally following up with those customers who did not rate us highly. Supervisors reach out to clarify the concern, if it was addressed, and if not, find a solution. HFS has found that many of these low ratings resulted from the roommate miscommunication, or because the issue had already been resolved after the customer submitted the survey, or from other communication issues. Occasionally, specific feedback also leads to improvements in our service processes.

Customers appreciate our follow-up and are even more satisfied after the follow-up than those customers who rated us highly. ■

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Knoxville, Tennessee

Submitted by Brooke Krempa, Communications Coordinator, Facilities Services



STAR TEAM FOCUSES ON CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR RESEARCH

In keeping with the University of Tennessee's (UT) academic mission, Facilities Services created the Special Team to Assist Research (STAR) as a subunit of its Zone Maintenance unit.

The STAR Team is a specialized team responsible for providing a more focused service function to the research community. This is accomplished by assisting new researchers while renovating their lab space, helping them get acclimated to campus, and installing their lab equipment to ensure they can hit the ground running when they arrive on campus. The team also assists existing research with changing programming requirements and day-to-day problems that may arise, such as issues with the lab's HVAC, electrical, and plumbing.

The STAR Team also takes the lead in developing projects for the Student Environmental Initiative's Green Revolving Fund to conserve energy on campus. The team has identified

several projects with expenditures nearing \$250,000 and savings of more than \$150,000 per year. These savings route back to the fund to allow financing of additional utilities savings projects.

This team is also leading the way to predictive maintenance techniques with vibration analysis, shaft alignment, and thermal analysis on campus to maximize efficiency. ■

RAPID RESPONSE TO CUSTOMER INITIATIVES

The UT Knoxville Facilities Services Rapid Response Team (RRT) was developed as a specialized subunit that handles overall facilities inspection, quality control, special projects, customer service initiatives, and emergencies. RRT receives work requests from all areas of the UT campus, and has a wide variety of skills in the areas of electrical, plumbing, carpentry, and heavy equipment.

The team organizes and executes Spring Cleanup, a special event held for nine weeks annually as an effort to declutter academic buildings by moving items no longer needed. Staff from RRT work building by building to help simplify the process. Computer and laboratory equipment, furniture, office supplies, paper files, and more can be recycled, discarded, or sent to UT Warehousing. In 2016, 3,312 cubic feet of material was recycled, taken to surplus, or disposed of at the landfill.

The subunit performs whole-building relocations and office relocations. New building moves consist of complete move-in of new equipment, furniture, and supplies into facilities.

RRT is also responsible for setup and teardown of special events on campus. This includes delivery and setup of tables, chairs, stages, and containers for recycling and waste. During the 2015-16 academic year, more than 700 work requests were performed by RRT. ■



UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Charlottesville, Virginia

Submitted by Vibha J. Buckingham, Associate Director, Building Services; and Sandra A. Smith, SPHR, Manager, Quality Assurance + Staff Development

TAKE YOUR CUSTOMER'S PULSE AND IMPROVE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

Sometimes we're too quick to formally gauge customer satisfaction. Electronic surveys may or may not get customers' attention, and once launched, esurveys take a great deal of time to organize and interpret. Communicating that we care and are making changes to improve can be challenging, particularly when respondents are promised anonymity.

We continue to do biannual electronic surveys where customers give us their candid reviews of our work. But we decided survey-taking needed to have a more personal touch. To make it easier for customers to give us feedback that some consider "bad news," they use numbers and not words to describe their satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

It works like this: Once a quarter, managers select customers and ask five questions. The responses range from 1 through 5, with 5 being the best.

"Tell us how you feel about..."

P=Performance of our management team

U=Understanding your needs

L= Level of cleanliness of your space

S=Staff (front-line) performance

E=Everything else—what else would you like us to know?"

Responses 1, 2, and 3 are less favorable ratings, and we follow up on them to reach customer solutions. Responses 4 and 5 indicate that customers are happy and satisfied. To complete this metric, we reassess each successive quarter with the goal of finishing the year with at least 85 percent of our responses being 4 or 5.

This one-on-one approach gives us another opportunity to have customer conversations, and at the same time, show them that we care about how they feel. In the end, when the numbers don't say "we love your work," we listen carefully.

Taking your customer's PULSE is a prescription for success. Give it a try and see if it doesn't help improve the quality of your organization's health. ■



TAKE CARE OF YOUR EMPLOYEES FIRST . . . AND THEY'LL TAKE CARE OF YOUR CUSTOMERS

This year, we made workplace "happiness" a performance goal. How can we increase workplace satisfaction, add doses of fun, and reduce employee stress? At the same time, our management team wanted to inject some surprises into workdays that can seem mundane and monotonous.

Making satisfaction at work an annual performance goal ups the importance of adding fun to everyone's work day. Every manager will be evaluated on how positive his or her employees feel. Some of the ways that we'll measure success are through brief surveys to help us understand overall changes in mood or increases in productive workplace dialogues.

One important element of the goal is to empower supervisors to include fun in their daily routines. The only ground rules are that all activities must be respectful, legal, and reasonable. The goal is to just do something unique that grabs one's

attention, brings a smile, and overall creates a memorable moment.

We realize that every employee will not look forward to coming to work every day. But what we can realistically expect is that in each corner of our business, there will be more smiles, more solutions, and higher levels of engagement. As an added bonus, we expect an increase in customer satisfaction levels. When employees feel good, the positivity always transfers directly to our customers. ☺

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