



The City of San Diego

REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: January 24, 2007 REPORT NO: 07-023

ATTENTION: Public Safety & Neighborhood Services
Agenda of January 31, 2007

SUBJECT: Quarterly Report on Constituent Services

REFERENCE:

REQUESTED ACTION: This report provides updates on Constituent Services as outlined in the Chairperson's Report from the Strong Mayor – Strong Council Transition Committee. No action is required by the committee or council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Accept the status report.

SUMMARY:

Background

The Strong Mayor-Strong Council Transition Committee established an ordinance in October 2006 that recommended that the Mayor's Office and Citizen's Assistance provide a quarterly report on Constituent services. The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive account of various initiatives and systems that have been implemented over the past year, and report on the City's progress to continue to improve responsiveness to constituent concerns. This report will provide an overview of the City's Customer Services Department program initiatives; the results of the June 2006 online SERVey; an analysis of the Route Slips received between July 1, 2006 and December 31, 2006; and propose improvements to the Route Slip process.

Discussion

The year 2006 was a year of many accomplishments in furthering the City's commitment to World Class customer service. Especially important were the following.

- Creating the Customer Services Department
- Organizing the Customer Service Liaison Network
- Developing the Customer Service Initiatives
- Gathering Feedback from Customers
 - On Line SERVey
 - Route Slips

Customer Services Department

In 2006, the Mayor's Office established the Customer Services Department to help improve the way service is delivered throughout the City. The Customer Services Department is tasked with developing a customer service program that will encourage and support continuous improvement in high quality service delivery at all levels. Expectations and best practices are being developed, and there will be comprehensive customer service training in 2007. Feedback from the customers will be collected and measured in a variety of situations, to provide a well-rounded view of customer satisfaction. Recognition programs that reward staff for exceeding customer service delivery expectations will be augmented to provide positive motivation and reinforcement for those that go above and beyond average service.

There are many desirable outcomes from providing World Class service. Benefits to the organization include positive word-of mouth, positive media stories, and a positive reputation in the communities we serve. Each time a staff member interacts with a customer, whether in person, on the phone, or through voice mail, that customer forms and opinion about the entire organization. Those opinions and impressions last. By institutionalizing the closed-loop system described above, we can ensure that more and more interactions over time are positive.

There are also tangible benefits of providing great service to each staff member. As employees, we have control over many variables that could cause a customer to get upset or angry. If we are trained to recognize and control those variables, the result will include a customer base that feels less stress, which will in turn result in less stress for individual employees. Great customer service also increases job satisfaction. Everyone enjoys the feeling of having really helped someone in need. Lastly, by employing customer service techniques, employees will be able to help more customers in the same amount of time. Good service decreases turn around times, on hold times, and lines at the public counters.

Customer Service Liaison Network

In moving forward with this initiative, the Customer Services Department established a Customer Service Liaison Network (CSLN), which is comprised of over 60 City employees from various departments, including Development Services, Environmental Services, Metropolitan Wastewater, Engineering & Capital Projects, Office of Ethics & Integrity, Neighborhood Code Compliance, Personnel, Parks & Recreation, Police, Real Estate Assets, Risk Management, Water, and many more. The goal of the CSLN is to champion, develop and deploy World Class customer service delivery program components throughout the organization. This comprehensive work group is divided into various sub-committees that are tasked with specific deliverables.

Several specific project deliverables were completed by the Customer Services Department and CSLN in 2006.

Customer Service Initiatives

In 2007, the Customer Services Department will continue to improve the City's responsiveness to its citizens, as well as further improve customer service delivery. Some of the projects that will be completed in 2007 include the following.

- 3-1-1/Call Center Feasibility Study (Feb 2007)
- New Employee Orientation and Supervisor's Academy Modules (Feb 2007)
- Citywide Large Group Workshop (March 2007)
- Citywide Comment Form (March 2007)
- Citywide customer service best practices development (Spring 2007)
- Mystery Shopping Program (Summer 2007)
- Citywide customer service training (Summer 2007)
- Coordination with Business Process Reengineering and Performance Measures/Balanced Scorecard initiatives (ongoing)

The planned surveying tools mentioned above, including the Citywide Comment Form and the Mystery Shopping Program, are designed to augment current department collection processes.

SERVey Results

An online customer satisfaction SERVey offered constituents the opportunity to provide feedback about City services. This questionnaire was posted on the City's main webpage for the month of June of 2006, and received over 1300 responses. The most favorable opinions occurred in the areas of Arts & Culture Programs, Quality of Housing, Quality of Fire-Rescue Service and Trash & Recycling Services. The least favorable areas include the City's past handling of finances and assets, previous ethics and integrity in City government, affordability of housing and maintenance of streets. This customer feedback has been distributed to the departments for their use in continuous improvement efforts.

Route Slips

Route Slips are concerns or requests for services received by the Mayor or City Council. This program was developed to provide a centralized mechanism for these concerns to be quickly routed to City staff for resolution. Route Slips are coordinated by the Citizens' Assistance Program of the Customer Services Department, and are sent to the responsible departments for citizen follow up and resolution. Route Slips represent a portion of the service requests that a department may be resolving at any given time. Often, inquires and requests are submitted to the departments directly by the citizen, as opposed to first being submitted to an elected official, and then be routed to the department.

The Route Slip process uses an electronic application called CompleteGov. This system provides Council members the ability to electronically forward and monitor constituent issues, and receive responses to those issues. It also allows examination of the types and numbers of concerns being received in any given time period.

For example, the most common issues raised by constituents over the first six months of Fiscal Year 07 include: traffic calming issues (10%), code violations (10%), potholes/resurfacing (9%), weeds/trees (8 %), trash/debris (7%), other (7%), street lights (6%), and sidewalks/curbs (6%). The category of "Other" includes questions about current events such as the Rock 'n Roll

Marathon, the Charger ticket guarantee, or items that require a response but are not reoccurring questions. All of the remaining categories combined represent 37% of the 1202 Route Slips that were distributed within this time period.

The Route Slip program also tracks the average time to complete and resolve a customer’s concern. In the past, individual departments used various definitions of “closed.” Some departments considered the Route Slip closed when they initially made contact with a constituent after receiving the Route Slip from the Route Slip Coordinator. Some Departments considered the Route Slip closed only after the actual request was completed. Because of this discrepancy, it is difficult to compare relative closure times from this six month period. However, raw data for the average “closure” times of the top 8 categories of requests/concerns outlined above are as follows.

Concern/Request Category	Number of cases during this time period	Average Number of Days Until closure	Mode of Days until closure
Traffic Calming Measures	126	33	29
Codes Violations	115	22	20
Potholes/Resurfacing	107	25	14
Weeds/Trees	96	17	15
Trash/Debris	86	18	13
Other	79	26	14
Street lights	76	18	15
Sidewalks/Curbs	73	18	15

It is important to note that the mode of the days until closure is lower than the calculations of the average number of days to close a request. The average number can be skewed by one or two cases that take longer than the rest to resolve. The mode more accurately and realistically reflects how quickly these inquiries are closed in most cases. The mode is the number that appears most frequently when looking a listing of how many days each case being considered was closed.

A working group was formed to make recommendations to further improve the Route Slip process. These changes will allow trend comparisons of resolution times, both in implementing the Route Slip Program itself, and in providing solid metrics for departments to track trends for internal resolution of like requests. We propose implementing the following changes as a pilot, in our continued efforts to enhance the system.

The pilot will include an “interim closure” data point. This will be the date that the department makes first contact with the citizen (either written or over the phone) after receiving the inquiry from the Route Slip Coordinator. This contact will include an acknowledgement that the concern was received by the Department, what actions will be taken, and the contact information

for the staff member in charge of resolving the situation. The goal for completing the interim closure will be 5 business days from the date the route slip is received by the department.

There will also be a “final closure” date point tracked. This will be the date that the request was addressed. This could be the date that 1) the information requested was provided, 2) the work was completed, or 3) a response was sent to the requestor indicating that the work would not be completed or no further action would be taken and why.

If a Route Slip can be closed, as defined by “final closure” prior to the 5 day measure, the process will be completed without an interim closure date. This will eliminate the need for one of two contacts, and will streamline the program for both the departments and the citizen who submitted the request or concern.

Conclusion

Providing superior quality customer service benefits City employees, the customers of the organization, and the organization itself. Each time a staff member interacts with someone else, internal or external to the City, that person forms an opinion about the organization. We have the opportunity, in each of these moments of truth, to influence the lasting impression of each person.

The objective of providing World Class service is a catalyst to meet our “One City” vision. By designing an umbrella program for the City, we support our staffs’ efforts to provide service within a strong and consistent framework of quality delivery. Customer service is how you choose to do your job every day. Organizational guidelines, training, surveys, recognition programs, and improving processes (such as 3-1-1) continue to shift the focus for our customers from “service silos” to the “One City” model.

The Customer Services Department will achieve success with these efforts with the continued support and hard work of the city employees and the Customer Service Liaison Network. We will continue to connect the dots between the needs of the citizens, the services provided by local government, and the high quality service delivery goals of World-Class organizations.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

PREVIOUS COUNCIL and/or COMMITTEE ACTION: June 15, 2005; City Council Transition Committee; Subject Constituent Services

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS: N/A

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND PROJECTED IMPACTS: Citizens and Employees

Customer Services
Originating Department

Deputy Chief/Chief Operating Officer