

Customer Service Advisory Committee

The Customer Service Advisory Committee was created in September 2006 to assist all City bureaus in working collaboratively with their employees to improve customer service. Building a culture of customer service will ensure that the City government is seen, both internally and externally, as a reliable partner and steward in running the City.

In 2005 the Bureau Innovation Project #7 was charged with developing recommendations for improving customer service policies and procedures across all City bureaus. In adopting the BIP #7 recommendations, the City Council endorsed an ongoing process of customer service improvement, beginning with clearly defining a culture of customer service, then ensuring employees have the tools to meet those expectations, then surveying customers to assess the effectiveness of improvement efforts.

The Customer Service Advisory Committee (CSAC) has prepared guidance and collected examples in the three priority areas of **defining the culture of customer service, workforce development, and customer service surveying**. That information can be found in the Customer Service Toolkit page of the CSAC webpage:

<http://www.portlandonline.com/index.cfm?c=44197>

During the FY 2007-2008 budget process, the Mayor asked all bureaus to report on implementation of the BIP #7 recommendations. Each year going forward, the CSAC is requesting a status report on customer service efforts in the three priority areas. The intent is to gather information from bureaus on their activities during the current program year, for an annual report to Council. The status report template is attached.

The CSAC intends to be an ongoing resource to assist bureaus in customer service improvement efforts. Bureaus should feel free to contact any member of their committee site team for assistance. A current list of site team members can be found at

<http://www.portlandonline.com/index.cfm?c=44198>

Questions? Please contact Committee Chair John Dutt, Office of Neighborhood Involvement at (503) 865-2625

Customer Service Improvement Status Report

Bureau: Bureau of Development Services
Staff Contact: Mark Feters, Sr. Management Analyst
Phone: (503) 823-1028
Date: February 2, 2009

Bureau Mission and Goals: Please attach copies of your bureau's mission, goals, and any workplans or other policy documents that specifically address customer service improvement efforts. Please describe how your strategic plans include customer service, and any plans for improvement.

Customer Service Culture

Over the last few years BDS has successfully integrated a customer service ethic into the fabric of the organization. The bureau's mission requires being responsive to the development community, neighborhoods and citizens. BDS's vision is to be the best development services agency in the country by deploying development review systems that meet the time-sensitive needs of the development industry and by satisfying neighborhood organizations' and citizens' concerns about the quality of development and the need for access to information.

Service to customers and stakeholders is considered in everything BDS does, and is reflected in several of the bureau's key planning documents, including the Mission, Goals, and Values; Management Principles and Expectations; Strategic Plan Framework; Customer Service Solutions; Diversity Committee Charter; and the BDS Employee Handbook. Copies of these documents are attached, including chapter three of the Employee Handbook (Customer Service and Communication with the Public).

Another key element of BDS's customer service focus is the bureau's system for receiving and resolving complaints through its Customer Services Division. Customer Services staff works directly with customers and BDS staff to work through issues and find satisfactory resolutions to complaints regarding bureau services.

Strategic Plan

In 2008 BDS launched a strategic planning process that identifies customer experience as one of its key areas of focus (see attached Strategic Plan Framework). The planning process has involved staff from all levels of the bureau as well as customers, stakeholders, and industry partners to ensure that their needs and interests are clearly understood and addressed. The bureau intends to produce a 5-Year Strategic Plan in spring 2009.

Diversity Development

The bureau's Diversity Committee's mission is "to cultivate the development of a diverse, culturally competent workforce and to create an inclusive workplace culture through strategic initiative planning and implementation." This mission is being realized through ongoing outreach and education work with BDS employees regarding diversity issues and cultural competency, resulting in better service for the diverse community of Portland. These efforts have been recognized through diversity awards received by the bureau and BDS staff, including:

- 2007 City of Portland Diversity Award (BDS)
- 2008 City of Portland Individual Contributor Award (Mikal Shabazz)
- 2008 City of Portland Bureau Diversity Committee Award (BDS)

Customer Service Assessment: Please attach a copy of your most recent customer service survey and survey results. Please indicate how your bureau assesses timeliness, accuracy, helpfulness, expertise, and available information. If you do not currently survey bureau customers, please explain any future plans.

BDS has been conducting annual customer telephone surveys since 2002 using contracts with outside vendors. Each year approximately 675 customers are surveyed regarding BDS land use review, plan review and permit issuance, and inspection services. The survey measures customer satisfaction with the timeliness and quality of bureau services, the adequacy and quality of information provided, and the knowledge, helpfulness, fairness, & availability of BDS staff and development review staff from other bureaus.

At the completion of the survey, the vendor provides the bureau with a report containing detailed survey results and analysis highlighting improvements and areas of concern. The bureau uses the survey results and analysis to guide decisions regarding services, programs, staff training, and budget expenditures.

The bureau's 2008 customer survey was completed in September, and the final report has been received and reviewed. A brief summary of the 2008 survey results is attached; to obtain a copy of the final 2007 survey report once it is available, please contact Mark Feters, BDS Sr. Management Analyst at 503-823-1028 or mark.feters@ci.portland.or.us.

Workforce Development: Please describe any efforts you have made to develop customer service competency within your workforce in the areas of recruitment, training, and evaluation. Please share any details you can provide regarding progress in these areas over the past year (training program information, key bureau contacts, recruitment/evaluation material examples, etc.).

Most of the bureau's specific efforts to develop customer service competency have focused on recruitment and training.

Recruitment

In order to better reach underserved populations with employment information, the bureau's Outreach Committee develops a recruitment plan for each open position. Plans include methods for reaching diverse populations, such as advertising in ethnic publications or using personal contacts with underserved communities to disseminate recruitment information.

Interview panels are provided with guidelines for interviewing and communicating with people from diverse backgrounds. Interview panels are encouraged to include an interview question related to customer service, and this is done in most interviews. Much of the bureau's work involves providing direct services to customers, both over the phone and in person. Because of BDS's commitment to providing outstanding customer service, the bureau places emphasis on candidates with customer service experience, communication and problem-solving skills, and cultural competency.

Training

- Customer Service Training – In 2003 BDS worked with a consultant to develop and deliver tailored customer service training to all employees, with additional training for supervisors and managers. The training covers internal as well as external customer service, and focuses on the unique customer service challenges in code enforcement work. The attached "Customer Service Solutions" document is a product of the training. All new employees go through this training after hire. A training binder is available upon request.

- Interest-Based Problem Solving Training – In 2005 BDS hired a consultant to develop and present training in the Interest-Based Problem Solving (IBPS) process to groups of bureau managers and employees. Approximately 75 employees participated in this initial training and 29 participated in follow-up trainings in 2008. The IBPS process has become the bureau model for resolving issues amongst bureau employees and between employees and the public. The bureau also uses IBPS in resolving customer complaints and risk claims. A document summarizing the IBPS process is attached; this document has been made into a poster that is hung in all BDS conference rooms.
- “I Contact” Customer Service Presentations – BDS hosted multiple “I Contact” presentations by Michael Meines in 2007 and 2008. Mr. Meines’ philosophy – that organizations improve their customer service by helping their employees feel good about themselves and their work – meshes well with the value the bureau places on employees as the organization’s most important resource. Presentations have been very well received by BDS staff and are helping to reinforce the bureau’s customer service culture.
- Doughnuts for Diversity – Since early 2007 the bureau has hosted a series of speakers on a variety of diversity topics as part of the bureau’s Diversity Development Program. The meetings are open to all bureau employees and have been well-attended and received. These meetings have facilitated ongoing conversations amongst staff regarding diversity issues and are a key part of the bureau’s effort to improve customer service through increasing employees’ cultural competency.
- Front-Line Orientation – In early 2007 BDS hosted a two-part orientation for the approximately 80 staff with the greatest amount of frontline customer contact. The training focused on helping staff better understand what the bureau’s various sections and workgroups do, improving cross-section communication, and routing customer inquiries more accurately and quickly. In response to many requests from staff, an updated orientation was held in January 2009.