

CAO CONNECTION

Volume One, Number Five

April 1996

A NOTE FROM SCOT FAULKNER

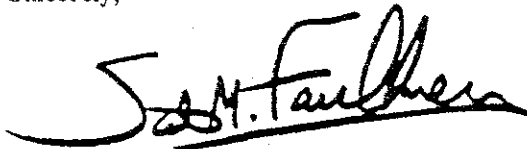
The world of customer service is all around us. We see large service-oriented retailers successfully compete with established local stores, and niche markets expand to compete with chain stores. Why does this occur? Because one service operation becomes better at understanding and meeting customer needs than the other.

We can understand this because we are all customers. We have been a part of shaping the Washington-area consumer environment by our individual service decisions. Every day we have dozens of customer service interactions. Every day we encounter the consumer spectrum — from good service to bad to perhaps none at all. To have more good than bad experiences we become selective: we avoid one store over another, and we consult with friends about a new restaurant before going there. Eventually, the market hears and sees what we do, and the good service operations expand while the others either change their ways or whither.

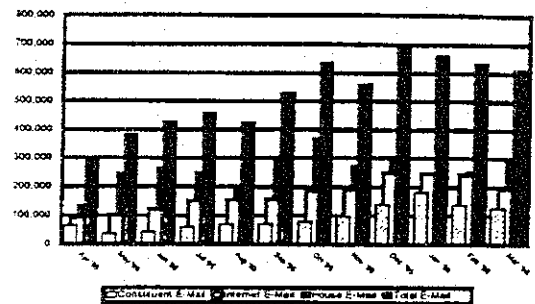
It is no different on Capitol Hill. The 10,000 employees of the House seek service and encounter the spectrum of service competency, just like in the rest of the world. Our challenge is to expand good service experiences and reduce and eliminate the bad. We can do this by realizing that what we expect as good service, is exactly what every one of the 10,000 House employees expect when they require administrative support: courtesy, competence, and the satisfaction of their needs. They also want to feel good about the service interaction. They want to feel that we actually cared about their well-being, and that we were happy to be of help. This is not rocket science, it is basic human nature.

During the next few months we will be polishing our customer service skills. We will learn about customer service “banking,” where every positive service interaction builds trust, confidence, and a partnership with the customer. We will also learn what behaviors can undermine the partnership with the customer and reduce our “bank account” of goodwill. It will be an exciting opportunity to better understand our own mission and role in the House.

Sincerely,



House Information Resources
House, Constituent and Internet E-Mail Usage



This chart represents a 112% growth in House E-mail messages from April, 1995 to March, 1996

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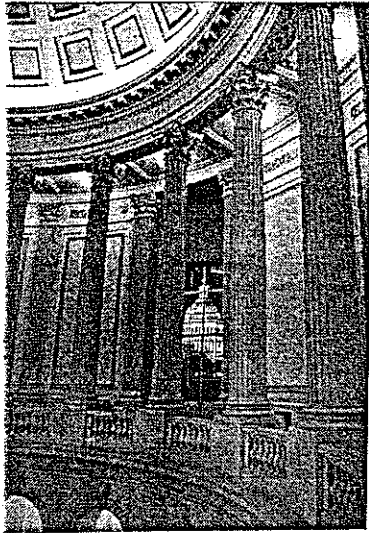


Photo by Dwight Comedy

A TASTE OF THE HILL

Baaaak-laa-Vaaaa: Say the word slowly. Let it roll off your tongue, or even through your imagination. Alexander the Great's army carried an ancient baklava recipe from Macedonia to Egypt, and from there it spread to many of the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It was adopted by the Athenians and Spartans and eventually became a Greek national dish. The Greeks perfected the recipe in much later years with the use of phyllo dough in place of the more coarse, pita type dough of prior years and the use of some spices not known during the origin of the recipe.

Imagine thick, golden honey chocked full of sweet nut meats suspended between thin layers of phyllo dough so thin and flaky you're tempted to think of the finest lace doilies. Baklava, the classic walnut and honey dessert perfected over the course of 2,500 years, is prepared and served by Mrs. Soula Skenteris in the Ford Building Continental Cafeteria, along with other authentic Greek dishes. Mrs. Skenteris' recipe contains about 60 percent nuts, making this is a fabulous treat for hardworking staffers.

Soula Skenteris is the wife of Jordan Skenteris who, with other family members, constitute The Skenteris Family, Inc., operators of the Ford Building food services. The Skenterises bring authentic Greek cuisine and history to the House. Be sure to take the opportunity to join the crowds who have discovered the Continental Cafeteria. □

FROM THE OFFICE OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

The April calendar provides several opportunities for many of us to reflect, and perhaps to set new goals toward overall health and well-being. For example, did you know that April is Alcohol Awareness Month and Listening Awareness Month? This is a time to increase our awareness about issues important to all of us, both on and off the job.

- 5** **Alcohol-Free Weekend:** Increases public awareness of the problems associated with drinking alcohol on weekends. Americans are encouraged to refrain from drinking alcohol this weekend.

- 16** **National Stress Awareness Day:** Health-related organizations throughout the country are encouraged to sponsor stress education programs and events. This day falls the day after income taxes are due!

- 19** **Oklahoma City Bombing Observance:** On April 19, 1995, a bomb exploded outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people – 19 of them children.

- 21** **Big Brothers/Big Sisters Appreciation Week:** April 21 through 27, honors men and women who serve as Big Brothers and Sisters to at-risk children.
Boys and Girls Club Week: April 21 through 27, recognizes the over 1,700 Clubs providing programs in art, education, and sports to 2.2 million youngsters.
National Volunteer Week: April 21 through 27, honors those who volunteer for community service projects.

- 25** **National Take Our Daughters to Work Day:** A national public education campaign where girls aged 9 to 15 go to work with an adult host to observe workplace activities.

The Office of Employee Assistance hopes you have a healthy April. For more information about alcohol-related issues, financial concerns, stress, or communication and listening skills, call extension 5-2400 for confidential assistance. □

COST OF QUALITY DISCUSSION: HOW WE MADE VIDEO CONFERENCING AFFORDABLE

First, think of a video conference as an event. For those who are unfamiliar, a video conference is simply phone service, with video. And every time a Member of Congress books and uses the video conferencing machines, it is called an "event."

The House of Representatives purchased two video conferencing machines in the early 1990's. After this had been accomplished, several committee hearing rooms were wired to accommodate the use of video conferencing. Employed for everything from town hall meetings when the Member could not be present, to long distance testimony by committee witnesses, the machines saw some use. However, the machines had to be moved to a storage area in the Cannon Building after each use.

Here is where the cost-of-quality issue comes in. Simply moving the video conferencing machines cost, on an average, \$800 to \$1,200 per event. While video conferencing may be less expensive than satellite uplinks and downlinks, the costs for set-up, testing and break-down were extremely high. Every time a Member or committee wanted to hold a video conference, the above-referenced costs were accrued. The machines had to be moved out of storage (a sometimes damaging or destructive process), set up (with full testing so that the conference was assured of successful completion) and then broken down and returned to storage.

In June 1995, it was decided to establish a permanent video conferencing facility in the House Recording Studio where the technology could be made more available to Members. After water damage to one machine was repaired, they were moved to the Rayburn Building where the results have been very successful.



Photo by Dwight Comedy

There are no more moving costs, the set-up is accomplished by House employees, and Members enjoy having a facility within walking distance of their offices and the House Floor. In the last five months, they have been used 17 times, a fifty percent increase in their use since being moved to a permanent location. That is a great return on an investment that had been sorely underutilized and underappreciated. And, it makes great fiscal sense. For more information, call Jim Davison at extension 6-0765. □

Welcome to March's New CAO Employees!

Joseph Lee Adams, HIR Communications
Scott R. Ellis, HIR Communications
Michael Parker, HIR Client Services
James C. Roman, HIR Integration
Octavia Tuohey, CAO Immediate Office
Shanel Wesley, HIR Client Services

INFORMATION SECURITY

Information system security is a big and tough job! This area is receiving a great deal of attention because systems are becoming more complex and the threat of system attack is on the rise. To meet the goal of building a sound information security program, everyone's help is needed. It is similar to having a neighborhood watch program where everyone is involved.

HIR Security plans to develop new policies and procedures over the coming months to augment existing ones. It is essential that everyone understands their role, as well as the rules in the overall security program. At the core of the HIR Security program will be a newly designed employee awareness program. Tools such as the World Wide Web will be used, and Channel 25 programming will be designed and implemented to provide fresh and exciting ways to impart information.

Your job will be to stay current with the latest information as it becomes available and make our "neighborhood" a better and safer place in which to compute.
STAY TUNED! ☐

**ONECALL.CAO HAS MOVED --
AND WE'RE MOVING!**

Come visit us in B-361 Rayburn! See our new OneCall.CAO indexed information database. For more information call Edie Vivian and Barbara Hanrahan at extension 5-8000.

TRAINING CORNER

U.C.L.A. Graduate School of Management Professor Louis Davis, one of the trailblazers in the field of self-management, likes to talk about a puzzle he calls "The Magic Door." Why is it, he asks, that people who in their daily lives are responsible, committed to families, and able to plan and make decisions, at 8:00 or 9:00 A.M., Monday through Friday, pass through the "Magic Door" with invisible rays that deprive them of all of these skills and makes them in need of constant supervision? And then, magically, at 5:00 P.M., the rays reverse themselves, and these people once again become responsible.

The answer is this, according to Professor Davis: "When people are placed in an environment where they are not expected to make decisions or to take responsibility, they won't. Very few organizations demand that their workers be anything more than dumb animals, so they act that way."

The intent of the CAO is to build a core of high performance service professionals managing the administrative services for the 500 business units of the House. Education and training alone will not give us world class performance; it's only one of the essential ingredients. The education and training system interacts with all the other systems, such as management systems, human resource systems, technology systems, etc., to help provide the competencies needed.

The overall purpose of the Organization and Employee Development Center's strategy is to provide a comprehensive leadership and employee development process that will offer multi-level modules to employees of varied experience focusing on issues ranging from fundamental supervisory skills, team building, empowerment, and interpersonal skills to complex organization systems and strategies.

Together we want to build a system to use existing resources to achieve quality customer service that challenges and changes the old processes by redesigning a new organization. By creating a culture built on quality that will support openness and risk taking, we will recognize the creativity of each individual as we serve Congress and our country with customer service built on teamwork. For more information, call Wendy Younk at extension x-60526 ☐

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