

CAO CONNECTION

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The Tale of Two Servers

A Note From Scot Faulkner

We are all customers. This is one of the great benefits of learning more about customer service. The more we learn, the more aware we are as consumers. This means that everything we do, allows us to view and critique the way others attempt, and sometimes succeed, to provide us with excellent service.

The hot and muggy Washington weather reminds me of a recent service encounter I had which provided an excellent example of true customer service.

I pulled into a rural ice cream carryout and walked up to the window. A long list of wonderful flavors was offered by the order window. Two young women were staffing the establishment.

Me: "Wow, what a selection! It's so hard to choose."

Server #1: "It's all great! We beat the competition up the street hands down!"

Me: "Let's see, how about an extra thick peanut butter shake."

Server #1: "Um. Unfortunately, our machine is down and we don't know when it will be fixed. Would you like some thing else?"

Me: "Hmmm. I really wanted a milk shake..."

Server #2: "You made a great choice! Those peanut butter shakes are my favorite too! Let me see, what if I made you an extra thick peanut butter Frappe, it's very similar to a shake and it's something I can make even though our machine crashed."

Me: "That's super! I'll try the Frappe."

Server #2 then gave me a "thumbs up" and delivered a wonderful peanut butter Frappe. This true tale offers a great service lesson. Offer the customer viable alternatives and negotiate a solution. Telling a customer how many ways you can't meet their needs gets you nowhere, but working with the customer gets you a "win-win" solution. It worked at that rural carryout. It can work here.

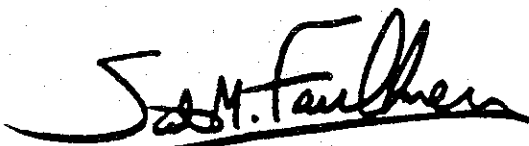
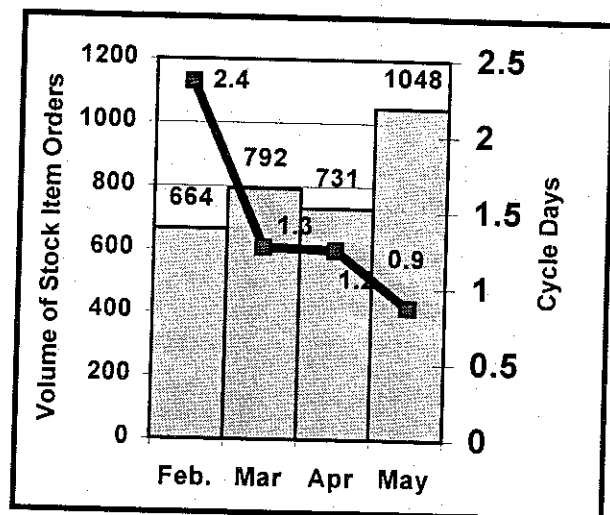


Chart of the Month

Office Supply Service Monthly
Cycle Time for Stock Requests



The chart of the month represents the volume of stock orders being filled and delivered monthly and shows the average cycle time of each delivery. Requests are received daily from Members, Committees, Officers, and support offices. The average cycle time for a delivery has decreased dramatically since February. A job well done to all the staff at Office Supply Service.

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Taste of the Hill: A Tex-Mex Mess

Earlier this month Capitol Hill was graced with a new place to exercise your right to as much Tex-Mex as possible, Tortilla Coast, formerly of the Senate side, has joined us on the House side. We visited it 10 days after the new restaurant opened.

Dining at a new restaurant is risky business. And writing a review of it is just as risky. Well, if the restaurant is in a location that's busy, the restaurant management must be prepared to get the bugs out of the system in a hurry. Ten days wasn't enough.

12:30 pm was a bad time to arrive at the restaurant. As we entered, David Brinkley and guest were being seated at a prominent table. A group of five just ahead of us were told that there was an hour wait. Since there were only three of us, it was a thirty minute wait.

We went to the waiting room, where wall colors of lime green, raspberry, banana and a cobalt blue seemed to reflect colors of cool beverages. Less than 30 minutes later, we were escorted to a table in the far corner of what must be called the Iguana Room. Our room had a desert motif, with the edge of a nomads tent without side flaps looking out on First and D Streets over our heads. The tent ceiling came down to a low point with very little circulating air reaching this crowded corner of the restaurant.

We did order a refreshing beverage from the menu priced from \$3.00 to \$5.00. Everything on the menu looked good, with many combinations to choose. We skipped the appetizer list and placed our order for a Baja Taco and Steak Burrito a little after 1:00 pm. Entrees are priced from \$7.00 to \$12.00. Fortunately there were corn tortillas with fresh, mild salsa as an appetizer. To shorten this story, 50 minutes later our barely warm lunch plates arrived. The Baja Taco (catfish stuffing) seemed like it had the promise of a great meal if it had been warm.

It wasn't and we returned the order. The Steak Burrito was prepared from a tender cut of beef and grilled medium rare. Although not very warm either, it did prove satisfactory. The pinkish rice served with the Burrito was without any special flavor, but it was the only hot ingredient served on either plate. It may simply have been lack of heat, but the black beans also seemed without any special flavor or taste.

The waiter was appropriately embarrassed and management picked up the check and offered a replacement lunch at a later time. We'll be back and I hope they get the kinks out in a reasonably short period of time. The restaurant has promise and I don't want to have to remember another restaurant name next year.

Does Quality (Zero Defects) Really Matter? *If employees around the country are giving just 99.9 percent, then ...*

- Two million documents will be lost by the IRS this year.
- 268,500 defective tires will be shipped this year.
- 14,208 defective personal computers will be shipped this year.
- 2,488,200 books with the wrong cover will be shipped in the next 12 months.
- 5,517,200 cases of soft drinks produced in the next 12 months will be flatter than a bad tire.
- 12 babies will be delivered to the wrong parents.
- 18,322 pieces of mail will be mishandled in the next hour.
- 114,500 mismatched pairs of shoes will be shipped this year.
- 107 incorrect medical procedures will be performed by the end of the day today.
- 315 entries in Webster's *Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* will turn out to be misspelled.



CAO GRADUATION DAY - CAO Associates Shine

The second CAO graduation for associates who have attended Building A Quality Culture, the course on quality management principles, was held June 5, 1996 in the Gold Room in the Rayburn House Office Building. A total of 517 CAO associates have now attended this course and have become aware of the concept of continuous improvement in the delivery of service to our customers.

Dr. Armand V. Feigenbaum, an internationally renowned leader in quality management, spoke to the graduates. Dr. Feigenbaum is President and Chief Executive Officer of General Systems Company and the originator of Total Quality Control, the approach to quality and profitability that has had a profound influence on management strategy throughout the industrialized world.

Dr. Feigenbaum has been a member of the Board of Overseers of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Program, and he is the inspiration for the Armand V. Feigenbaum Massachusetts Quality Award and the Dr. A. V. Feigenbaum Gold Medal Award for Singapore's Ngee Ann Polytechnic's outstanding Quality Assurance Engineering graduate.

In his remarks to the graduates, Dr. Feigenbaum said the changes being made at the House are a very important symbol for America, especially for the two-thirds of our economy which is based on providing services. By successfully bringing business quality management practices to the House, we demonstrate the improvements that are possible in the face of customer demand for more services and, at the same time, for more affordable services.

CAO Associate's Spotlight - A New Feature in the CAO Connection

Calling all softball players. The CAO softball team needs your participation. We play once or twice a week against teams from Congressional Offices, Associations and media outlets. If you'd like to play, please call Kristin in the Office of Human Resources and Policy Administration at extension 50696.

Clara Vann White, Special Orders Clerk in Office Supply Systems retired effective July 5, 1996. After 20 years on the job, Clara decided it was time to leave and spend time doing something she has always wanted to do, learn how to play the piano. She will also be spending time doing activities with her church. We wish her well, and will miss her smiling face and happy attitude.

Kristi Muench, a Graduate Student Intern who spent this past academic year with the Office of Employee Assistance was married to Ensign Clay Beers at the U.S. Naval Academy Chapel on Saturday, April 27, 1996. She just completed her academic work at the University of Maryland at Baltimore and graduated last month with a Master's Degree in Social Work, specializing in employee assistance services. The CAO and the Office of Human Resources extend their deepest gratitude and a hearty "well done" to Kristi for her contributions to the office and her service to the employees of the House. We wish her much happiness in her marriage and a very successful employee assistance career.

Jennifer Borcharding, Special Assitant to Ken Miller, AA for HIR, was married May 18, 1996 to Robert Feinstein, who is an Investment Banker. The ceremony was held at the River Bend Country Club in Great Falls, Virginia. After the wedding, Jennifer and Robert honeymooned aboard a 50 foot sailboat in the Greek Isles.

Mike Dorsey, Administrative Counsel to the CAO, was married June 8, 1996 in Topeka, Kansas to Carolyn Buck, General Counsel at the Office of Thrift Supervision. The private ceremony was attended by friends and family. The happy couple is currently enjoying a honeymoon for two weeks in Japan.

Welcome to June's New CAO Employees!

Kevin McPhee, HIR, Client Services Group
Kathleen Barker, HIR, Client services Group
Edith Ann Marrero, HIR, Client Services Group
E. James Caskey, Jr., HIR, Immediate Office
James Segreti, HIR, Integration Group
Donald Turner, HIR, Communications Group

Process Improvement Works...

And Makes a Difference

With the closing of the Folding Room on August 31, 1995, Congressional staffers had to learn how to prepare a mass mailing using outside vendors. In the past, they used computers and software that was specifically supportive of the Folding Room and the way it processed mail. With the transition to the USPS, regulations for mass mailings were creating additional work of staff and vendors and ultimately causing delays in processing and getting information to constituents.

The old process had Congressional offices spending six to ten days time with 11 to 15 different steps. Everything from obtaining a current Congressional District Deliveries Report from the USPS to coordinating production of the Franks to be used was involved. Chris Naughton in the Office of Mailing Services examined the process for Postal Patron mailing and vastly improved it.

Working with the USPS, Chris developed a way to accept the postal information and provide printouts to Congressional staff. The Office of Mailing Services is now receiving this information weekly from the USPS. Once an office requests a Deliveries Report and a set of Facing Slips the order can be completed in about one hour.

With these changes, the overall preparation time of six to ten days has been cut to about one hour. This saves the Members and the House money, and untold hours of keying information into a computer.

Great Job!

TRAINING CORNER

GUEST WRITER: SUSAN ZELENIAK, OFFICE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS

There is so much talk these days about "empowering" employees but what does that really mean and how does a manager go about making it happen? The Client Services management team of HIR clearly saw the advantages of involving more persons in the planning and decision making process but where and how to begin? We decided to start by attending as a group the *Flight of the Buffalo* seminar led by Wendy Younk. We selected this class because the brochure stated we would examine the changes leaders must make in their own behavior so others in the organization feel empowered.

Among the most important lessons we learned is the importance of the "vision thing." A manager can not expect staff to lead if the goals are not clearly defined and communicated. We then need to look for ways to actively involve all employees in the process. In the customer service environment, it is especially important that all staff feel they have the support of management to show initiative and make decisions. After all, they are in front of the customer every day! During the seminar, we were able to clearly define our role as offering the support system for staff to be successful in meeting the organizational goals. This support system not only includes the training, equipment, and staff resources to get the job done but also 'includes access to information.

Taking the class as a group gave us the opportunity to discuss how we could implement the valuable concepts addressed in the seminar. It also allowed us to openly discuss the risks in relinquishing control, but I can already report that we have had important success. Recently, the staff took on the responsibility to design a functional reorganization of our customer support team and the results have already improved our responsiveness. But like any important skill, learning to let employees lead is an ongoing process and requires an honest commitment to changing your own behavior.

This seminar was a great first step!

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