

Customer Surveys



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Summer 2008



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The City of Houston is like a very high maintenance vehicle and requires a lot of up keep. Right of Way Fleet Maintenance is the division that maintains the infrastructure of the city. This includes all existing structures from pot holes to clearing debris from neighborhood ditches. One may be use to finding customer surveys at department stores, restaurants or service stores. Since this division is highly important in maintain the up keep of the city. It is imperative to know what the citizens of Houston have to say about the maintenance work that is being done in the City. You may be asking why are customer surveys are important to the City of Houston? Why are they important to the department? And where do the work orders come from?

"On Monday, August 27, 2001 the City of Houston launched the 3-1-1 Houston Service Center, which is a consolidated call center that provides citizens with an easy-to-remember telephone number for quick, reliable access to city services, 7 days a week, from 6 AM to 12 Midnight". This call center makes City government more accessible and responsive to City residents. Citizens are able to use the 3-1-1 to request service on traffic fines and sewer concerns to pothole problems and neighborhood

complaints. When Houstonians call 3-1-1 they have the opportunity to speak to one of our highly trained customer service representatives who process requests for information or services. The Houstonians have the ability to track the Customer Service Request system (**CSR**) from start to finish with the tracking number that is given to the citizen at the time that they place their request. "There are over 300 specific service request types have been identified and scripted within the system. The system also enables the city to keep pace with modern technology, allowing requests to be submitted by email, internet, phone, letter or fax. The **CSR** system provides increased accountability for city departments and their personnel. The system generates numerous reports by department, by division within a department, by service request type, council districts, zip codes, key map locations, participants, and by geographic area. Regular reports identify any outstanding service requests that have not been resolved within the designated timeframe. This provides greater opportunity for management/supervision of department personnel and assessment of the impact of deployed resources." Houston 3-1-1 system has proven to be a key asset in communicating with the every growing city.

Right of Way Fleet Maintenance receives the customer service orders from the 3-1-1 system that involve the

maintaining of an existing structure. Once the service requests are received they are sent out the 10 different substations and the assignment/service order is completed in a timely matter. The first action that is taken is an investigator is sent to the site where the complaint has been made, the investigator will be the access as to what work (if any) needs to be done. The investigator also decided if this is an issue of great importance and the allotted time that the work needs to be completed in. From there the work is completed by city workers or is completed by an outside contractor. The follow up process for the service order is when the citizen who placed the complaint into 3-1-1 is then called to confirm if the work was completed to their satisfaction.

There are three types of surveys that The City of Houston, Right of Way Fleet Maintenance Division executes throughout the fiscal year. One type is the Customer Surveys, which allow Houstonians to voice their opinions on the work that has been completed by City of Houston Employees. This is a phone survey that is administered once a month by an employee from the Right of Way Fleet Maintenance Division. The Surveyor places a call each citizen and are simply asked "Were you satisfied with the work that has been completed?" The surveyor then records the citizens' response. If the citizen/customer happens to be unsatisfied with the job; a new work order can be requested.

Then the department will have an investigator go to the job site and evaluate the work that has been done. After the information is collected it is graphed (figure 1) and formed into a presentation that is compared to past surveys and is presented to the 3-1-1 deputy directors. The division's goal is to achieve a satisfaction rate of 90% or better. This satisfaction rate is the factor that indicates whether or not the division is not performing as well as expected or that the division is performing above the expectation. The results also allow the Directors and the supervisors to pin point area in which the division is struggling or an area in which the workers need to improve on.

The second type of survey that the Right of Way Fleet Maintenance Division administers a Quality Inspection Survey this is done by a two district supervisors. These supervisors visit the work site and evaluate each job. Their first objective is to see if the work that was asked was completed. The second objective is to see if the work was completed according to the divisions' standards (figure 2). For example if a citizen requested for a pot hole to be filled and according to the workers it was completed and the requests is closed, an investigator will visit the site and verify that the work has been completed but if the work is not to the divisions' standards or if the asphalt that was used to fill is no longer

there due to the weather or to the high traffic of the site another request will be made to have the site worked on.

The third type of survey that the Right of Way Fleet Maintenance division administers is the Fleet Customer Survey. This survey is to evaluate the work completed by the fleet employees who work on other city employees' vehicles or other mechanical equipment. City employees rely on the fleet division to maintain all city vehicles from an oil change to any motor problems. This survey is administered either by email or by telephone. Some of the questions are "were you satisfied with the work that was done on your vehicle and was it completed in a timely matter?" (See figure 3)

The feedback that is received is an extremely important is the City's way of contacting the citizens directly. One of the major down falls to the Customer surveys that are administered to the citizens is that people have different opinions as to what is to their standards or have different opinions as to what should be done and what is cost effective for the city. Most of the time Houstonians are pleased to receive a call from the Right of Way Division, many citizens see this as the city's opportunity to better their customer service and to better understand the citizens' request.

The City of Houston can also be viewed as a large franchise. In speaking with many of the citizens of Houston I

have found that there are two things that the City of Houston is known for, "being slow in taking action and not completing the job correctly." The surveying system that the Right of Way Division and 3-1-1 utilize is cost efficient and effective, but has room for improvement for a city the size of Houston. For example the process when the citizen is surveyed and is displeased with the work that has been done and would like to request another service order, the only response that the surveyor can give the call is to call 3-1-1 again and explain the problem and request work to be done. As previously stated people have different opinions as to what is their perception of complete is as oppose to what is a satisfactory job done by the city. I propose that the surveyor maybe can choose type of question that is asked. If you leave the question to broad the customer/ citizen answer may be misleading or persuaded to be more negative than positive just by the way the question is asked. Writer Deborah L. Vence has provide four ways to modify surveys to improving customer feedback; the first is be specific "the question should cite the location and date of customers visit," the purpose is to take the customer back to the experience and break it down into steps, was the customer dissatisfied with all of the work that was completed or just portions of what was done. The second get customer feedback and be flexible, which suggest that companies should be flexible in

accommodating changes and updating the surveys to fit the ever changing customer. Another way to be flexible is to use a control group to test the impact that the survey could have on the customer/ citizen. The fourth suggestion is to keep a complaint log which will give the company the opportunity to view what the customer is not satisfied and where they company needs improvement.

The time and type of surveying is another aspect that can be improved. The surveyors call the citizen during the day when most people are not at home. With today's technology there are many different ways of communication and the most effective way of communicating is through email. According to Tim Schaden in his article, Your most Effective survey Tool is E-mail, the internet highway is "the world's most effective, most relevant customer survey and relationship tool and it is less expensive and more accurate than third-party surveys because the reaction is based on real- world opportunities." An email system will allow the city to receive feedback from other customers who have out of area phone numbers. Email is also time effective and customers are more like to respond sooner. The problem with calling a citizen during the day is that most citizens are at work or are not able to answer a few questions due to their busy lifestyles. Keeping the phone survey would still be effective for the elder citizens who are not as computer proficient as

others. One drawback from using the email survey system is that the customer/ citizen might feel that it is impersonable. One way to prevent that is to construct an email that allows the customer/ citizen to feel as their responses are of great importance and are truly important to the city of Houston.

There are many things that continue to change but there is one that remains and that is the goal of providing excellent customer surveys.

Work Cited

Samuels, Tracy. Personal interview. 10 July 2008.

Schaden, Tim. "Your Most Effective Customer Survey Tool is
Email." Franchising World Oct. 2007: 16.

Vence, Deborah L. "Modify Surveys to Find 'whys' Four tips
improve Feedback." Marketing News 15 Apr. 2004: 17.

(Fig 1)

Quality Inspection Report For May 2008

The data below are the results from Quality Inspections conducted for May 2008. Four questions were used to perform inspections (see first table below). They were answered using selections yes or no. The results shows the correct location was serviced 100% of the time. Investigators (including field personnel) made the right evaluations and referrals 100% of the time. Service was rendered 100% of the time. Repair/service met quality standards 99% of the time.

Questions	Yes	No
Was the correct location serviced?	100%	0%
Did investigator make the right evaluation and referral?	100%	0%
Was service rendered?	100%	0%
If yes, does repair/service meet quality standards?	99%	1%

The table below shows a breakdown of the 100 service requests inspected. Note: Percent "Yes" column represents the percentage of time "Yes" was the answer to all four questions.

Service Requests	# Inspected	% Yes
Skin Patch	30	99%
Pothole	20	100%
Regrade Roadside Ditch	50	100%
Total	100	

Fig 2

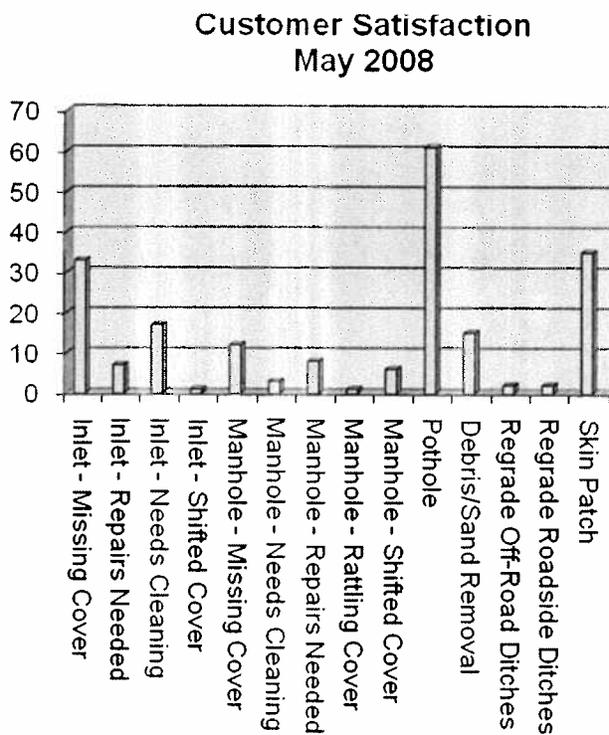


Figure 3

	Yes	No	%Yes	%No
Was your vehicle serviced/repared to your satisfaction?	90	3	97%	3%
Was your vehicle serviced/repared in a timely manner?	93	0	100%	0%
Was the staff professional and courteous toward you?	93	0	100%	0%
Total Respondents	93			