

Customer Survey Program

New program to measure, improve customer service

By James J. Feda
Director of Maintenance

A new program has been developed as part of the Director of Maintenance Office business plan to measure and improve customer service in the Maintenance Division.

The Customer Survey Program has recently been developed in response to the Department's Strategic Planning Goal of improving Customer Service by 10%. The program is intended to determine the level of customer service currently being provided to our customers and also to identify areas of opportunity for improvement.

The maintenance division has a great deal of interaction with external customers. We receive personal visits, phone calls, and letters daily requesting some type of service. We track a great deal of information about how we respond to the customer's request for service through our Highway Maintenance Management System (HMMS). One thing that we have been missing is feedback from the customer about their level of satisfaction. To fill this void, the Director of Maintenance Office staff created a Customer Survey Program to poll some of the customers for feedback.

What is the Customer Survey Program and how does it work?

The Director of Maintenance Office Staff has developed a survey form that is used to survey maintenance customers throughout the state. The survey form contains a brief description of the intent of the questionnaire. It also contains interesting facts printed on the back of the form to educate our customers about SCDOT. There are four survey questions located at the bottom with an additional small area allotted for comments. The survey has return postage paid to encourage a higher rate of return. A program outline and sample survey form is displayed below.

Maintenance Survey Program Outline

Purpose: To measure the level of customer service provided by SCDOT's Maintenance Division. Analyze on-going survey results to assist with decisions and ideas relating to customer service improvements.

Target Group: The target group will be SCDOT customers who have contacted a SCDOT Maintenance Office and requested work. These customers

are identified using information collected in HMMS. We generate a list of customers sorted by the completion date of the Work Request. This ensures a timely survey of the customer after the work has been completed.

DATABASE: The same report generated to identify the customers will also contain other pertinent information related to the work request. The Work Request Number will be included on the survey form so the response can be associated with the actual Work Request. The survey data is captured electronically as the survey forms are returned.

SCOPE OF SURVEY: We generate mailings periodically. The number of surveys mailed is determined by the rate of response and follow-up time. Comments that are documented on the survey form are addressed appropriately.

REPORTING: We plan to analyze data in numerous ways. We can use the Work Request Number to link the survey results to the actual work request. Customer service reports can be generated and analyzed by district, county, activity, work description, crew number, etc. Performance trends can be tracked and analyzed.

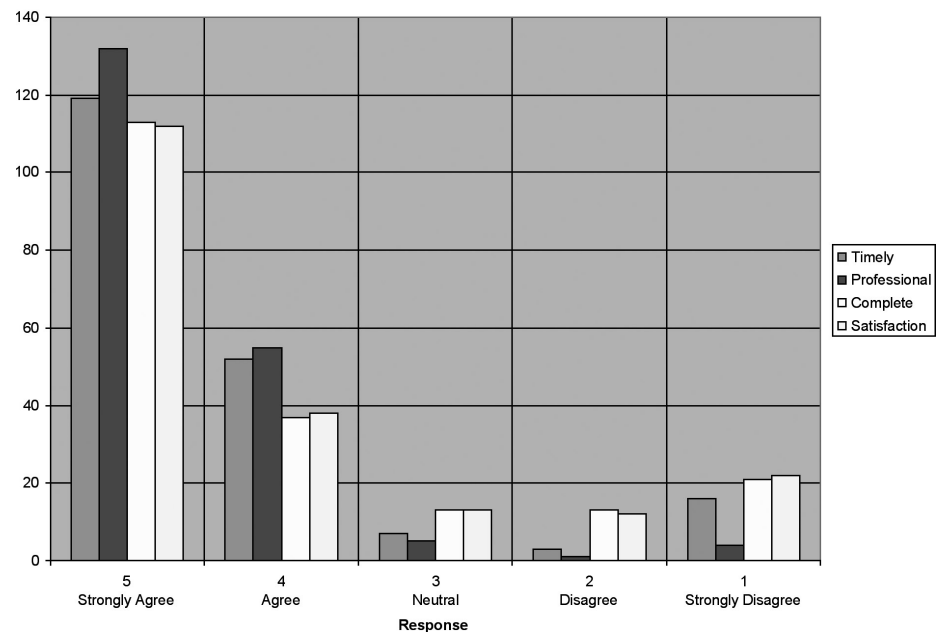
VALUE: This program is used to evaluate the Maintenance Division's customer service performance. Initial information will help establish a benchmark for our current level of customer service. As the database of returned surveys grows, performance and trends can be evaluated on many different levels. The Director of Maintenance intends to eventually have districts incorporate this information into their business plans and establish goals for customer service improvements. We also plan to include this information in the Department's Accountability Report. This program provides direct feedback from the customers that the Maintenance Division is servicing.

FEEDBACK: Quarterly reports are generated by the Director of Maintenance and shared with the Districts and the State Highway Engineer for analysis and direction. Action-plans will be developed and implemented to improve customer service.

What have we learned from the Customer Survey Program?

This program is still new, so we are still working out some of the bugs. So far, we have mailed out five hundred

Maintenance Customer Survey
Through May 2005



(500) surveys. Seventy-two (72), or 14%, were returned as undeliverable. We have received 197 responses from our customers. This is a rate of return of 46%.

We have been very pleased with the responses that we have received. So far, this program has reinforced the notion that we have many great maintenance employees that do an excellent job. A chart has been included above that displays the results that we have received. In addition to the survey responses, we have also received many positive comments.

What are some of the comments that have been reported?

We have received some negative comments, but the overwhelming majority have been very positive. Some of the comments that we received are:

"Could not have asked for quicker or more professional service. The morning after I filed my request, the work crew and supervisor were at my home to verify location and then did the work."

"If my phone call was responsible for this work, I would have to say that this was the most effective response I have ever seen by a government agency. Very well done!"

"Your people were polite and very helpful. I was extremely pleased with the results!"

"Surprised at how quickly and professionally job was completed! Thank you!"

"The work was performed sooner than I had anticipated which was very nice. I really appreciated that prompt, well-done job. The SCDOT did an excellent job."

"Impressed with the immediate response."

Do you have any recommendations that are a result of this survey?

This program is still very young. It is too early to identify significant opportunities for improvement. However, one problem that we have encountered is that there have been a significant number of surveys that have not been deliverable. Apparently, in many cases, the address recorded in our Work Request module of HMMS is not the actual mailing address of the customer. I would like to ask those responsible for accepting work requests from customers to ensure a complete and accurate address is recorded.

Are the results shared with the maintenance units?

Yes. First, all responses are recorded in a central database for statewide analysis. Then, if the response is negative, we ask the District Engineering Administrator to follow up with the customer and attempt to resolve any outstanding issues. For all of the other responses, we share the survey feedback with the District Engineering Administrator and the District Customer Service Representatives. Then, the districts distribute the survey responses to the appropriate county units for discussion and improvements.

In closing, I would like to thank all of the maintenance employees for doing such a good job dealing with the public and my staff for working so hard to put this program together. It is rare for satisfied customers to call and say thank you. This program provides a convenient opportunity for our customers to respond. As evidenced by the results, the maintenance units are doing a great job satisfying the overwhelming majority. Thank you!

DEATHS

Chester M. Mantooth, 84, of Greenville, SCDOT retiree, died Dec. 9.

Charles Melvin Reames Jr., 83, of Columbia, retired SCDOT Maintenance Engineer for Orangeburg County, died Dec. 17.

Paul Ray Slice Sr., 71, of Columbia, SCDOT retiree, died March 12.

Richard John Ott, 57, of North Charleston, an SCDOT civil engineer for 34 years, died May 11.

Johnny Hallman Nunn, 73, of

Wagener, SCDOT retiree, died May 13.

Lawrence H. King, 70, of Lexington, SCDOT retiree, died May 26.

Timothy Graham, 51, of Chester, SCDOT Traffic Signal Division supervisor at Chester, died May 31.

Maurice Dixon Moseley Sr., 96, of the Lowman Home, retired Bridge Engineer with SCDOT, died June 4.

Robert "R.C." Barfield, 82, of Sumter, SCDOT retiree, died June 1.

Carl W. Payne Jr., 79, of Cayce, who retired from SCDOT after 37 years of service, died May 30.

Teleta L. Shelton of Chester, administrative specialist at Chester Maintenance, died March 2.

SCDOT gets high marks for efficiency in Hartgen Report

SCDOT has sharply improved its ranking in overall cost-effectiveness among all state DOTs from 22nd to 3rd in the nation in a period of one year, according to an independent report.

The ranking was released in the annual report compiled by Dr. David Hartgen, a professor of Transportation Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. The report, "TEA-21's Impact: Performance of State Highway systems 1984-2003,

14th Annual Report," was issued Feb. 23, 2005.

For 2003, the top three states in overall cost-effectiveness were North Dakota, Wyoming and South Carolina. They were followed by Georgia, New Mexico, Texas, Montana, South Dakota, Oregon and Kansas.

"South Carolina moved up from 22nd to 3rd after sharply improving its rural and urban interstate conditions," the report noted.

LETTERS WE LIKED

To whom it may concern:

Yesterday evening during 5 p.m. rush hour traffic, I decided to have my first tire blow out. I was terrified. But my husband called your service and a very nice gentleman,

John H. Williams, came to my rescue. My tire was shredded and he changed my tire and got me back on the road. I tried to give him a small token of my gratitude and thanks, and he would not take it. So not only

was he very kind but he was so honest and ethical as well.

I was very impressed with him, he explained all the services they offer and where and how I could call them myself if I had another reason to be in need of his service again.

I just thought you might want to pat him on the back

for his professionalism and honesty;

Thank you,

Carmen H. Hudson
Sales Manager
CableVantage

To: Mitchell Metts
I-73 Project Manager

I do appreciate the opportu-

nity to voice my concerns today at the town meeting in Marion County. I further appreciate the opportunities to be able to stay in touch with your team.

I was treated with respect and courtesy today as was my mother and other family members, and we appreciate that.

Timothy B. Cooper