

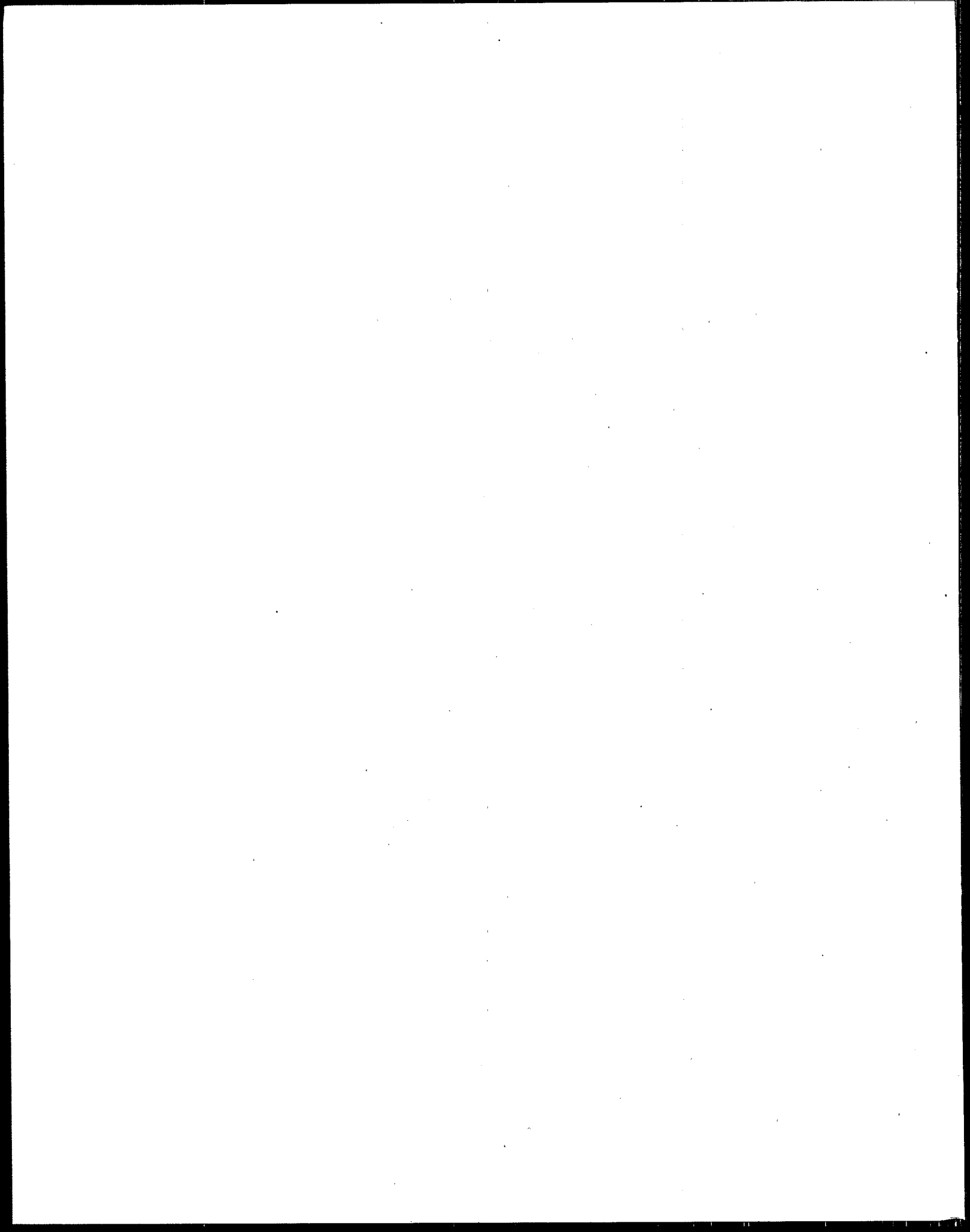


# Proceedings Of The First EPA National Customer Service Conference

A stylized, high-contrast illustration of a rocket launching. The rocket is angled upwards from the bottom right towards the top left. It has a conical nose cone and a cylindrical body with various panels and windows. A large plume of smoke and fire trails behind it. The background is a map of the United States, with the rocket appearing to launch from the southern part of the country. The entire illustration is enclosed in a rectangular border.

**"Launching  
World Class  
Customer  
Service"**

**April 14 - 16, 1998**

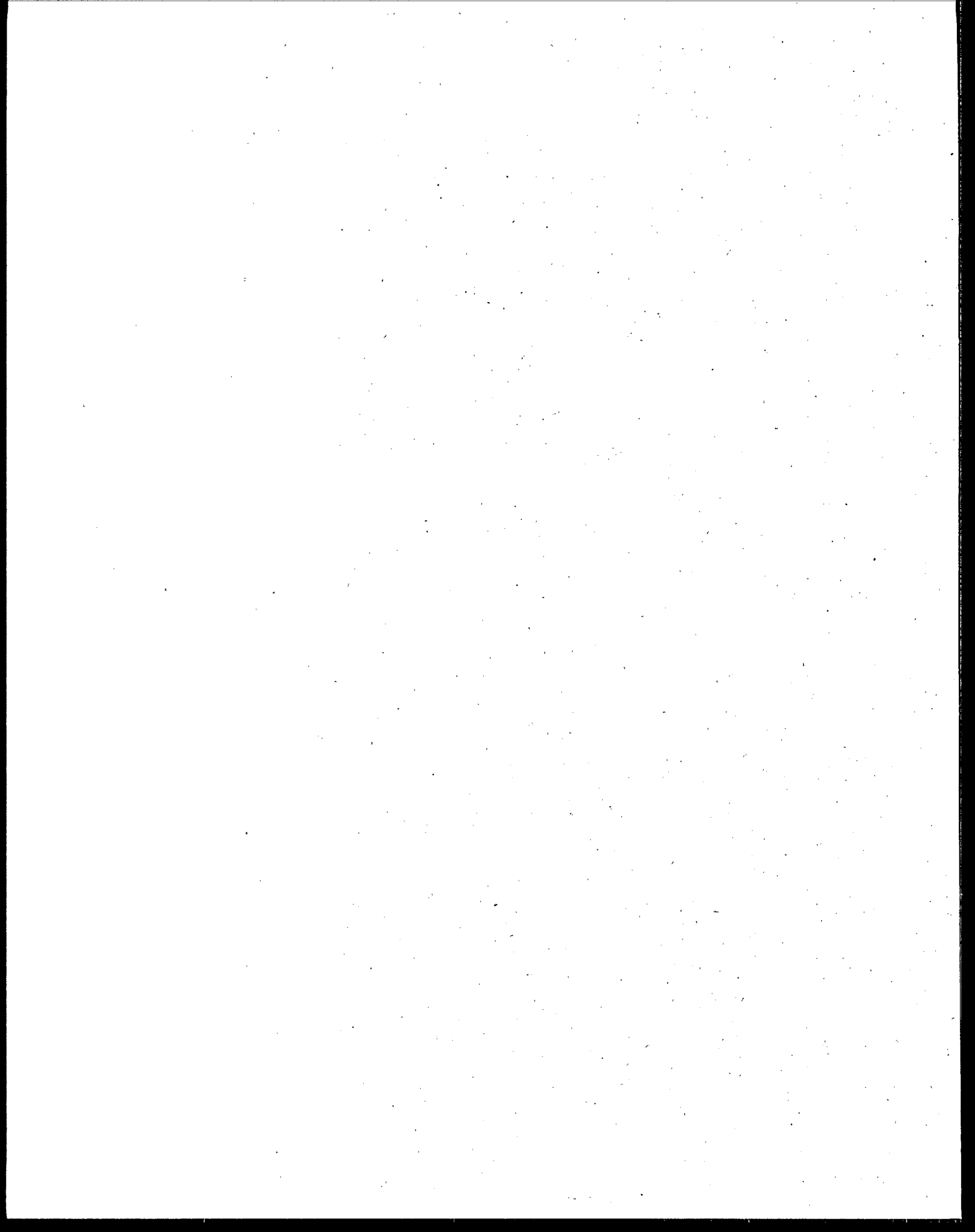


**EPA NATIONAL  
CUSTOMER SERVICE CONFERENCE  
APRIL 14 - 15, 1998  
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

**Hosted by  
EPA Region 6  
at the Harvey Hotel, Plano, Texas**

**"Launching  
World Class  
Customer  
Service"**





## **Acknowledgments**

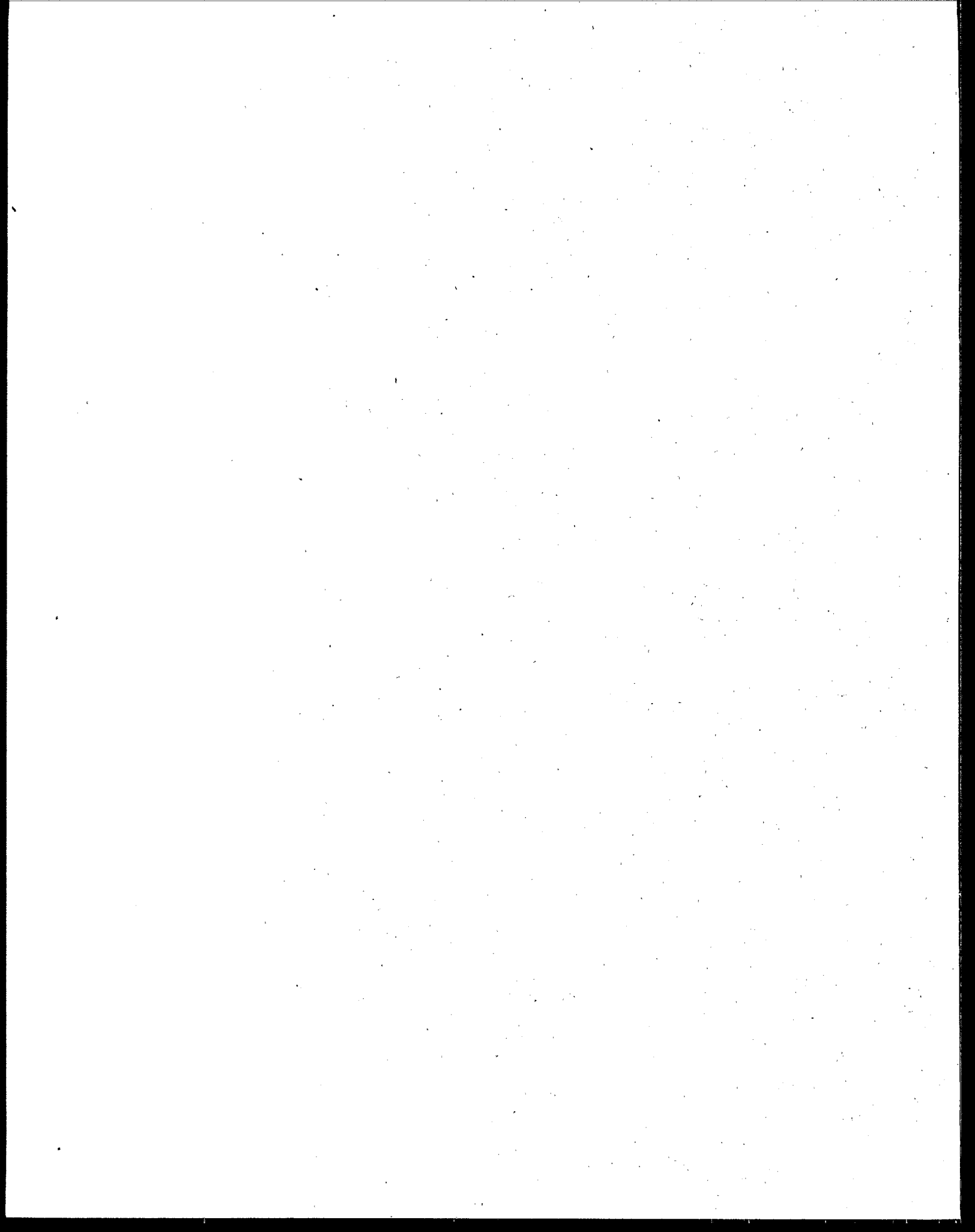
The Region 6 Customer Service Council members were the driving force and genial hosts for the Environmental Protection Agency's First National Customer Service Conference. Without their great ideas, leadership and persistence, there would have been no conference in 1998.

Without the willing participation of the EPA Moderators from the Customer Service Steering Committee (the policy group that forms customer service policy), the conference would have been less focused.

The good work of the many Recorders who prepared draft notes from all sessions made this Proceedings document possible.

Thanks to everyone who helped "Launching World Class Customer Service," a success.

Pat Bonner (Proceedings Editor)  
Customer Service Director



**Proceedings of the First National Customer Service Conference  
"Launching World Class Customer Service"**

**Table of Contents**

<b><u>Item</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
<b>Acknowledgments.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Building Capacity for Change.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Speakers: Kenneth Wright and Carol Crawford, EPA Learning Institute	
<b>Voice of the Customer.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Moderator: Jim Makris, Director, Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Office (CEPPO/OSWER),	
<b>Core Processes Panel.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Moderator: John Jones, Assistant Inspector General for Management (OIG)	
<b>Customer Service Training.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Moderator: Marylouise Uhlig Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances (OPPTS)	
<b>Guidelines for Customer Service Feedback and Measurement.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Moderator: Peter Durant, Office of Research and Development (ORD)	
<b>Learning from the Best (Two sessions on each topic).....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Hotlines and Call Centers.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Moderators: Tom Reich, Water Quality Protection Division (Region 6), and James McDonald, Office of Congressional & Intergovernmental Relations	
Featured Speaker: Larry Stuker, Supervisor, National Call Center, Federal Communications Commission, Gettysburg, PA	
<b>Learning and Using Customer Expectations.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Moderators: Rene Henry, Director, Office of Communications and Government Relations (Region 3), and Steve Smith, Office of Research & Development (HQ)	
Featured Speaker: Kevin Cullinane, U. S. Mint	
<b>Complaints to Compliments.....</b>	<b>26</b>
Moderator: Sandy Hudnall, Director Executive Secretariat - Office of the Administrator	
Featured Speaker: Maynard Malaby, Chief, Service Delivery Branch, Social Security Administration (SSA)	
<b>Integrating Customer Service with Reinvention.....</b>	<b>29</b>
Moderators: James McDonald, Office of Congressional & Intergovernmental Affairs, and Marylouise Uhlig, Director, Office of Program Management (OPPTS)	
Featured Speaker: Carlton W. Roarke, US Postal Service	

## Table of Contents (continued)

<u>Item</u>	<u>Page</u>
<b>Benchmarking Customer Satisfaction.....</b>	<b>33</b>
Moderators: Marylouise Uhlig, Director, Office of Program Management (OPPTS), and Rene Henry, Director, Office of Communications and Government Relations (Region 3) Featured Speaker: Cathy Kern, Commerce, Patent and Trade Office	
<b>Planning to Act.....</b>	<b>35</b>
Anchoring Customer Service.....	35
Vision.....	36
Leadership.....	36
Internal Capacity.....	37
Conversations with America (CWA).....	39
<b>Launching Pad.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Speakers' Profiles.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Plano Memo.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>List of Participants.....</b>	<b>57</b>



## **"Launching World Class Customer Service"**

**April 14-16, 1998**

**Hosted by Region 6 - Plano, Texas**

### **PLENARY SESSIONS** (audio tapes available)

#### **Building Capacity for Change**

**Speakers:** Kenneth Wright and Carol Crawford, EPA Learning Institute

Customer service is a continuing and evolving process – it's reflected in the way we treat one another, and in our capacity and ability to deal with change.

The presentation outlined a framework for thinking about change (vision, planning, the implications behind the change, educating and anchoring cultural change), presented facts and statistics about what the public and private sectors are doing to accomplish change, and provided some suggestions to help each person find a good way to personally navigate change. Assessment and measurement tools were also listed.

The importance of involving stakeholders in all processes applies internally as well as externally. Any internal change, including the focus on improving customer service, requires extensive involvement of staff so they can navigate change for themselves, not feel controlled by it. Three things can help move to a customer service culture: top down displays of commitment to changing to a customer focused culture, a team approach to implementing change, and training that gives staff the confidence that they can use to increase their effective delivery of service (and mission).

In part, because we have so many different customers, challenges for EPA in customer service (as reported by MACRO International) include:

1. Customer satisfaction exists in the eye of the beholder.
2. Management and customers have different perceptions of the same transactions.
3. Employees and customers have different perceptions of the same transactions.
4. Merely satisfying customers is not enough. Go the extra mile.
5. Equal treatment does not result in equal satisfaction.
6. What do customers mean by satisfaction? (measurement)
7. Properly use the customer satisfaction data to improve our dealings with customers.

In the registration packet was a paper concerning building the capacity for change. Copies are available from Ken Wright (USEPA/OARM - Learning Institute, 401 M Street SW, Washington, DC. 20460)

## **Voice of the Customer**

**Moderator:** Jim Makris, Director, Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Office (CEPPO/OSWER), Member, Customer Service Steering Committee

### **Panelists:**

Judith A. Duncan, Director, Customer Services Division, Oklahoma DEQ  
Charles Tippeconnic, Director of Programs, Fort Sill Apache Tribe  
Elaine M. Barron, M.D., Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Edward C. "Ned" Fritz, Texas Committee on Natural Resources  
Richard L. Charter, V.P., Health, Safety, & Environmental Service, Fina Corporation  
Shirley L. Holland, Citizen

### **Key Questions of the Speakers:**

#### **Which services and products of the EPA do you use?**

Permitting, publications, technical assistance and advice, information/education/outreach materials, web pages and electronic services, rules and regulations, compliance assistance, training, voluntary programs, and many more.

#### **What are your expectations/needs (other than funding)? How well do we deliver our products and services?**

Some products and services are delivered well; others are not. Expectations for improvement are in the in the following areas:

- Involvement -- so there are no surprises (states)
- Working more and more as partners with the States
- Accessibility to people and data
- Flexibility in relation to rulemaking
- Prompt/efficient delivery of services and products
- Practicality in rulemaking
- Communications -- do more one-on-one conversations; use many vehicles to reach the client. Don't restrict ourselves to electronics
- Citizen input needs to be obtained at the outset of the process
- Accountability (now insufficient)
- Follow-up is slower than desired
- Continue to attempt to increase customer satisfaction while meeting mission requirements

#### **Over the past few years have you seen any changes in your relationship with us and in service quality? If so, what?**

- Customer Service - Many felt that EPA staff often provided excellent customer focus and service. It depended on who was helping you.
- Meetings/workshops/Q's and A's. They are planned jointly and as a consequence are

- better than ever. Meetings like this CS meeting are very helpful and positive.
- Flexibility -- We have proven to be more flexible and accessible in recent years.
- EPA Website is terrific.
- Citizen involvement at the front end has diminished.
- EPA has recognized the need for customer driven strategies.

### **What one thing could EPA do that would provide the biggest improvement for you?**

No panelist articulated just one area for improvement. They suggested the following issues were where we needed to focus our attention and efforts.

- Enforcement: Put enforcement back in the program. There is tremendous dissatisfaction with enforcement as it is.
- Flexibility/Practicality: We need to approach rulemaking and policy making in a more common sense and reasonable way than currently demonstrating. Regulations should be consolidated to improve efficiency and eliminate duplication. Recognize one size does not fit all. Decision making should reside at a lower level and should be approached with greater flexibility.
- Communications: We need to be careful regarding our electronic thinking and communications. When trying to reach the public, don't limit ourselves to electronic communications. It loses the human element. Use print media, radio, and libraries. One-on-one communication is essential. Customers stated they didn't want surprises or letters about issues never before disclosed. They wanted the communications early. Customers are not always aware of what information is out there because they don't know who to call or where to find it. Know your customers and how they access information, then find ways to meet their needs.
- Follow through: We need to follow through better. Say what we mean and mean what we say. Abide by agreements.
- Customer input: Full involvement with our customers at an early stage is critical. There is a strong perception of diminished citizen involvement and a lower interest on behalf of EPA. Citizens need to be a part of the rule/policy making process at the outset. The final product will be less without their input. A means must be found to fund their participation or they will always be left out of the equation.
- Customer Service: Courtesy is great but it needs to be balanced with substance. Answering the telephone or responding to mail/e-mail in a prompt fashion is important but substance must be a part of the response.
- Put the regulatory interpretations and rulemaking information on a separate web page for all rules and give it keyword search capability. Now the rulemaking is scattered. That would really help a lot. Consolidate rules and make them readable.
- Continue voluntary programs -- they have been very encouraging. And add some more incentives to speed things along. You don't always need a formal Order to get things done.
- Provide more staff training, not just in customer service, but also interpersonal communication skills. All it takes is a few people to give an office or region a terrible reputation. Communications improve one person at a time.
- Be accessible and provide more timely responses to requests from any customers. Push decision making down to the lowest possible level and do what you can.

informally.

- Learn more about the businesses you regulate; do more site visits.
- Address customers' complaints.
- Build trust between the Agency and its customers and the regulated community.
- Funding for the participation of citizens is sometimes critical; otherwise, many cannot involve themselves. States and counties often underwrite their participation. Even with satellite downlinks, everyone who wants to participate cannot get to them.....some because of funding, some because they have to work when the events occur. (Can FACA be better used?) Create more opportunities for open participation and discussion.
- Advertise your own information, its availability and how to access it.
- Have "traffic directors" who are responsible for responding to or properly referring calls.
- Write regulations to handle what we have the most of (use the 80/20 rule), and then deal with the complications rather than the reverse....dealing with the most complex/worst case situation.
- Educate the people you serve so they can participate.
- Help firms be responsible and comply as a first step rather than fine them...enforce as the last resort. Protection/education dollars should go up; enforcement dollars down.
- Continue to promote good customer service and relationships.
- For the Tribes, maintain and increase communications, technical assistance/training and, as possible, funding.
- Consider the needs of customers, particularly poor communities, when developing funding guidance, rules, processes and procedures.
- Be accountable – take responsibility for solutions.

**What can Customers do to help EPA provide good service? (Jim Makris added this question on site.)**

- Communicate what we want (all customers)
- Help self-regulate (industry)
- Educate themselves on environmental issues and their roles

#### **Summary by Jim Makris**

I have heard several words a lot during this panel discussion. They include: full involvement, recognition of trade-offs, trust, eliminate duplications, perception of diminished participation when we thought we were increasing it, consolidate rules, standards should deal with things that are important to customers, communications, dependability, reliability, consistency of policies and practices, knowledge as well as courtesy.

**Recorder: Shelley Levitt - OSWER**

## **Core Processes Panel**

**Moderator:** John Jones, Assistant Inspector General for Management (OIG)  
Member, CSSC

**Panelists:**

Stan Siegel (Region 2) - Permitting  
Chet McLaughlin (Region 7) - Partnerships  
Tim Icke (Office of Water) - State, Tribal and Local Grants  
Jim Downing (Office of Pesticide Programs) - Pesticides Regulation  
Peter Rosenberg (Office of Enforcement & Compliance Assistance) - Enforcement & Compliance  
Sandy Hudnall (Office of the Administrator/CSSC Member) - Public Access  
Nan Parry (Office of Research & Development) - Research Grants

### **Background**

The Customer Service Steering Committee (CSSC) and its core process groups developed standards in 1995. Senior leadership co-chaired each process group. After the standards were distributed and comments were reviewed, one of the consistent ideas was to eliminate as much duplication across the standards as possible. The Core Process leaders and CS staff developed the Agency's Six Rules of Customer Service in response to those comments. On May 8, 1997, Deputy Administrator Fred Hansen distributed revised standards to all employees. In February 1998, the CSSC adopted a streamlined, shorter version now called the Six Principles:

### **EPA's SIX PRINCIPLES OF CUSTOMER SERVICE**

1. Be helpful! Listen to your customers.
2. Respond to all phone calls by the end of the next business day.
3. Respond to all correspondence within 10 business days.
4. Make clear, timely, accurate information accessible.
5. Work collaboratively with partners to improve all products and services.
6. Involve customers and use their ideas and input.

### **Stan Siegel, Core Process Lead - Permitting**

The cross agency work group for permitting was re-formed in 1997 to encompass a multimedia approach. The new group adopted standards that were nearly identical to those of May 1997. Three of the four standards are subjective, so the group needs to set service

performance baselines using customer feedback.

## PERMITTING STANDARDS

In addition to the Six Principles, for our three major customer groups (the general public, the regulated community and delegated State, Tribal, and local programs) the following four standards apply to this process:

1. We will prepare permits that are clear, fair, appropriate, and effective.
2. We will be knowledgeable, responsive, cooperative, and available.
3. We will work with representatives of delegated programs to continually improve our delegation processes, so that they are as efficient, effective, and nonburdensome as possible.
4. For the regulated community, we will make our permit decision within the time frame that is established for the type of permit being requested.

The group has set out a plan for 1998-99, examined services provided, and determined its customer groups. The group has developed a clear mission statement which recognizes the need to involve delegated programs with EPA in serving customers. To that end, the group now includes state members and seeks to develop tools to assist states and tribes to measure and improve customer service.

**Goals:** The group has as its goals for 1998-99 to develop:

- a toolkit for measurement
- a communication strategy
- a plan to support culture change in the permitting arena, and to develop the "atmosphere" to foster, not mandate, the change
- a survey and memo to ask customers/partners for examples of success in service improvement for use in the toolkit
- support of implementing managers
- language for incorporating customer service in State/EPA agreements
- and implement a slogan and logo contest across the permitting staff of the Agency
- a questionnaire for members of the Core group to use in interviewing managers to learn if and why there may be reluctance to customer service improvements in permitting

### Chilton (Chet) McLaughlin - Core Process Co-lead, Partnership Programs

When the Partnership group was formed, partnering was considered a new way of doing business. The group developed eight standards of customer service, but did not implement them across all of the wide range of endorsed partnership programs (28). Twelve in the regions are not yet endorsed. Across the Agency, only 100 people are involved.

## PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS STANDARDS

The following standards amplify the Six Principles and provide additional goals for this process:

1. We will always treat our customers with professional courtesy and respect.
2. We will proactively provide our customers accurate, up-to-date, and reliable information, products, and services, including high quality documents and publications.
3. We will actively listen to our customers' concerns and needs regarding our services and will develop technical assistance services, where possible, designed to address those needs and concerns.
4. We will ensure that inquiries will be referred to the right office and individual in EPA, or beyond EPA, if appropriate. We will encourage customers to report back on unsuccessful referrals.
5. We will respond as expeditiously as possible to inquiries for information.
6. We will strive to make information available through various channels, including electronic media, faxes, and intermediaries such as state assistance organizations, trade associations, and state agencies.
7. We will recognize and publicly acknowledge the accomplishments of our customers who achieve success in voluntary programs.
8. We will make every effort to streamline and make customer reporting requirements as practical and least burdensome as possible.

About three years ago, the group agreed that there had to be "common metrics" to measure success and report annually. One was the number of partners: 6,000 in 1996, 20,000 in 1998, with a goal of 25,000 partners by the year 2000. Another is pollution prevented: 750 lbs. toxic substances not emitted, 5.7 solid waste tons not emitted - 1995. Dollars saved, rounds out the picture: \$360 million saved in 1995; a \$7 billion goal for Yr 2000. The now-ended 33/50 program met participation and toxic substances pollution prevention goals ahead of schedule. Partners in the 33/50 effort were presented certificates and their accomplishments were publicized.

The Partnership Programs Core Group will continue to use recognition and training to encourage prevention conservation. In coming years there will be a need to "justify" continuing some of the programs. Therefore it is important to use and improve measures of success, one of the new measures should be customer satisfaction.

### Goals for '98:

- Develop a model survey for all programs
- Set targets for numbers to be surveyed
- Seek actionable feedback.
- Evaluate results and communicate recommendations
- Feed results into programs and to all partners

### Tim Icke, Core Process Lead - Grants to States/Tribes/Local Governments

Regions I and VI participate in this Core Group along with Permitting Offices and the grants management organization within OARM. When the group began its work in developing standards and examining the grant making processes of the Agency, members decided to limit their core process to ongoing categorical and continuing grants across the Agency. This covers approximately 30 programs. The group developed four process-specific standards to be applied to those programs:

#### **STATE, TRIBAL, AND LOCAL PROGRAM GRANTS STANDARDS**

The Core Group adopted the following standards in addition to the Six Principles:

1. We will reduce the amount of grant paperwork by at least 25% through such activities as consolidation of application and reporting requirements, electronic transfer, and multi-year grant work programs.
2. We will acknowledge receipt of all grant applications within 10 working days.
3. For established grant programs, we will award grants funds within 90 days after receipt of a complete grant application (provided that the responsible EPA office has received funding authorization).
4. We will consult, in a timely manner, with states, tribes, and localities throughout the development of all major grants policy and guidance documents.

The Core Group developed and distributed a survey in 1996. As part of it, they asked recipients to comment on the proposed standards. The response rate was 37%. Of those, 64% rated the paperwork burden for EPA grant applications as about average, 60% of the respondents were satisfied with the grants process, and 49% were satisfied with the grant guidance EPA provided. Only 29% were satisfied with the opportunities for feedback to influence the grants process, and 82% supported a move to electronic applications filing

Has the Agency met the goals for this process? The answer is yes and no. In the area of paperwork reduction, two of the Performance Partnership Agreement states report a thirty to fifty per year reduction. A transaction cards effort will soon begin so that all applicants can be notified within 10 days that their application has been received and can be provided the opportunity to send back their comments. The new Integrated Grants Management System



(IGMS) will have an automated notice feature, so that cards will be printed up as applications are submitted. On the 90-day award cycle, some programs (wetlands, tribal multimedia, and State Revolving Fund) met the goal 100% of the time; others, as little as 10%. Obviously, there are opportunities for improvement. Two items to be implemented by Yr 2000 should help: electronic submittals and placing draft guidance on the Internet.

### **Jim Downing, Core Process Lead - Pesticide Regulation**

The Pesticides Program Office performed three surveys. The satisfaction rating of 4.4 of 10 was not considered good enough. The areas with the most difficulties for customers were telephone responsiveness, timeliness, and consistency (decisions).

In 1997, the Core Group formed a Front line forum of 36 people who worked together to develop an implementation plan for improving customer service. For the Pesticides Office, the Core Group has facilitated workshops in customer service awareness, and has reach 10% of the staff to date with "Forging the Links" (FtL). The goal is to train 50% of the staff by end of calendar year 1998.

In addition, the Core Group expects to examine and streamline its standards:

### **PESTICIDE REGULATION STANDARDS**

The standards following apply specifically to the pesticide registration process and should be used in conjunction with the Six Principles.

1. We will answer telephone calls within 24 hours of receipt, when possible. If the person receiving the call cannot fully respond to the inquiry, the customer will be forwarded to someone who can.
2. We will work to answer all correspondence within 10 working days of receipt. However, if our customers have raised questions which require extensive research to answer, it may take us longer. If we cannot provide a complete reply promptly, we will contact the customer within the 10-day period to explain why and when they may expect a full response.
3. We will seek opportunities to involve all affected stakeholders prior to our major regulatory or policy decisions.
4. We will provide clear and accurate information about the policies and procedures for pesticide registrations and re-registrations.
5. We will process applications and complete evaluations as promptly and as efficiently as possible without compromising either scientific quality or health and safety considerations.
6. We will ensure that we meet our statutory responsibilities to provide customers with easy access to all available information on pesticides.

7. We will proactively involve States, Tribes, and EPA Regions prior to establishing major policies or making major regulatory decisions affecting them.
8. We will undertake periodic surveys to find out what our customers think of our services and how we could make further improvements.

**Peter Rosenberg, Core Process Lead - Enforcement & Compliance Assistance**

Several years ago, the Office of Enforcement & Compliance Assistance (OECA) determined to supplement its enforcement work with voluntary approaches to achieving compliance with the environmental laws we administer -- to move away from a one size fits all approach.

The new way of doing business has three elements:

1. Formal enforcement procedures
2. Compliance assistance--technical information to help others to comply
3. Compliance incentives to motivate the regulated community to "police" themselves ( if they report a problem, they are given time and no penalty if they fix the problem)

In measuring success, this process group and OECA are attempting to learn not only customer satisfaction, but also whether the rate of compliance is improving as a result of its approaches.

To move the compliance work forward, they have developed a number of tools for the regulated community, and are continuing to expand the number as well as develop ways to combine the various tools for the customers. For example:

- 27 industry sector notebooks that cover pollution prevention, regulations, standards, tools to assist with compliance
- Working with the Chemical Manufacturers Association, OECA is seeking to determine the root causes of how/why facilities get into noncompliance so they can work together to determine how to move back into compliance and tailor processes to better achieve compliance.
- Plain English Guide/Plain Korean Guide to help Dry Cleaners comply with regulations
- Mentoring Project for dry cleaners may lead to other small business "sectors"
- There are four virtual Compliance Assistance Centers on the Internet, and four more planned for additional industry sectors
- Surveys of the Centers to learn if they help users to comply

In the enforcement arena OECA is working with the states using incentives for small businesses to report problems. If they work to correct problems with EPA and state help, then the states will not enforce against the small business out of compliance. Self-auditing is a work in progress.

Relationships with states are difficult, challenging, and changing as OECA works to strike a balance between its enforcement and compliance assistance operations and measure

the results. The measures strategy has just begun. The goal is to measure the environmental benefits of enforcement and compliance assistance to see what works better under which circumstances. Whatever the results of such measurement, there is still enough noncompliance to keep EPA & states busy.

## **ENFORCEMENT INSPECTIONS AND COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE STANDARDS**

The following standards apply in addition to the Six Principles:

### **Compliance Assistance Field Representatives:**

1. Requests for field assistance will be provided in a timely manner, taking resource constraints and expertise into consideration. Where assistance cannot be provided by the Agency, accurate referrals to other Federal, State or local agencies; private organizations; or educational institutions will be provided as appropriate.
2. Field representatives will be technically knowledgeable, understand the Federal regulatory requirements and Agency compliance and enforcement policies that apply to the facility, and be courteous and professional.

### **Compliance Inspectors:**

3. Inspectors will make clear who he or she represents and the purpose of the visit.
4. Inspectors will be technically knowledgeable; understand the Federal regulatory requirements and Agency compliance and enforcement policies that apply to the facility, and be courteous and professional.

### **Compliance Assistance Tools:**

5. In developing compliance assistance tools, the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance will:
  - o Develop tools responsive to the needs and concerns raised by all interested stakeholders.
  - o Seek opportunities to involve all interested stakeholders in the development of compliance assistance tools.
  - o Strive to make information available through a variety of channels, including electronic media and intermediaries (e.g., trade associations, state assistance organizations, state agencies, and community organizations)

### **Compliance Assistance Centers**

6. All Compliance Assistance Centers will be operated consistent with the universal and public access standards, and any additional standards established for individual centers.

### **Enforcement**

7. In all enforcement actions, the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance will be legally and technically knowledgeable, courteous and professional, and will work to

resolve issues as expeditiously as possible.

### **Sandy Hudnall - Core Process Lead for the Correspondence Public Access Group**

Under the Public Access Core Process Group, as it was originally established, its standards had to apply to everything the agency does and everyone who works at EPA. This was simply too large a job for a small group. The group set out its standards, but could not focus on implementation of all of them. It concentrated attention on a high priority item of the Administrator: improving electronic access to data and information.

This Spring, the group recommended that subgroup be formed to address key aspects of public access. Seven sub processes were listed:

- Hotlines and call centers
- Telephone answering by Agency employees
- Clearinghouses/publications
- Internet
- Controlled correspondence/FOIA and general correspondence
- Email response to public
- Libraries, information centers and dockets

The Customer Service Steering Committee selected telephone, correspondence and Internet as its top three priorities. In these three processes, recently formed groups can focus on implementing changes that are both doable and measurable.

When the Correspondence group meets, it will examine and address such issues as correspondence quality and timeliness, the need for standards to apply to electronic mail (both internal and Internet), the need to survey customers on the quality and timeliness (and other aspects) of general correspondence, training needs and the need to find some way to systematically pull together a picture of how we are performing as an agency.

At the time of the Conference, three things were needed: additional members for the Correspondence group who are managers, involved with dockets, or with public affairs experience. The group will welcome suggestions for improvements and information about ongoing, past or planned related feedback work.

Current overall Public Access Standards follow.

### **PUBLIC ACCESS STANDARDS**

These standards apply to requests for general information from the public. They do not apply where legal requirements take precedence, such as Freedom of Information Act inquiries. They are in addition to the Six Principles and amplify them as they apply to working with the general public.

1. We will strive to make information available through a variety of channels, including electronic media and intermediaries, such as community organizations and local libraries.

2. We will hold ourselves accountable for a satisfactory response by providing mechanisms (contact names and telephone numbers or e-mail addresses) for reporting back on the quality of our responses and referrals.
3. When customers write to us (via mail, fax or computer):
  - We will mail a response within ten business days of receipt. If we need more time to research the answer, we will contact the customer within those ten days to state when to expect our response and who the contact person is.
4. When customers telephone us:
  - We will provide an Agency-wide public information telephone line, which will help route inquiries.
  - We will answer the call promptly and courteously.
  - We will make every effort to answer questions immediately. Where that is not possible, we will provide a timetable for responding during the initial conversation.
5. When customers contact us via computer:
  - We will provide a single address for connection to all EPA resources on the Internet [<http://www.epa.gov>].
  - We will provide descriptions, including source and known quality, of data made available electronically.

**Nan Parry, Core Process Lead - Research Grants (ORD)**

The National Center for Environmental Research & Quality Assurance (NCERQA) in the Office of Research & Development (ORD) is the home of this grant program, the Science to Achieve Results (STAR) effort. There are 22 Requests For Applications (RFAs) on specified research topics.

The customers are program offices with research needs, they are also outside organizations that perform research, and ORD staff outside NCERQA.

The office has \$100 million to award. This core process works with partners in other federal agencies that also provide fellowships/grants to ensure that all are able to fund good projects. This past year grant awards focused on incentives for compliance, complex mixtures, and supporting the 16 centers that do science education in their community areas.

The three-member Core Group has been monitoring progress toward achieving its four standards:

### RESEARCH GRANTS STANDARDS

The following standards amplify and expand the Six Principles, applying them to the research grants process:

1. When issuing requests for proposals to all interested parties, we will include a tentative timetable for activities in the selection process, so that applicants will know when they may learn if their proposal is selected for funding.
2. We will acknowledge receipt of proposals and applications within 15 working days from the cut off date for receipt. The acknowledgment will include a unique identification number for each proposal and application so that applicants and agency personnel can more efficiently track their status.
3. The grants management office will conduct the administrative and legal reviews required for a proper award and issue the award of assistance agreements within 60 days from having received a request for funding from the research organization.
4. For active grants, the grants management office will process requests for administrative amendments to grants and issue the amendments within four weeks of the receipt of requests forwarded by the research organization.

The Core Group reports that 91% of the grant awards were made within the 60 days standard. The group was not always able to notify applicants and provide the unique identification numbers within 10 days, but that will change soon, when the system is automated. To meet the needs of its academic customers, the Core Group changed the timing (cycle) of its grant awards. The feedback came from customers who called an 800 number as well as through formal focus groups.

Recorder: Pat Bonner - OPPE

## Customer Service Training

**Moderator:** Marylouise Uhlig, Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances (OPPTS)

**Panelists:**

Kenneth Wright, EPA Learning Institute  
Arnold Ondarza, Region 6  
Nola Cooke, Region 8  
Rene Henry, Region 3  
Mike O'Reilly, OPPTS

**Ken Wright - EPA Learning Institute:** Some programs are using Fred Pryor courses to enhance customer service. It is up to each EPA program office to decide how they want to address improving customer service, but we believe that the Customer Service Program has excellent support available for those that wish to participate.

There are more than 175 people who are Zenger Miller (ZM) Certified facilitators in EPA; 86 people at HQ. Because Ken Wright is a Master Trainer, and can provide the certification training rather than have the certification done by the company, the cost savings amount to over \$300,000. Training capacity building needs management support to work. Managers must allow people to be certified ( a 4-day course), and then enable those certified facilitators to present courses to their fellow employees. There are six excellent follow-up skills Training Units by ZM which reinforce and expand what the introductory course, Forging the Links presents:

1. The Leader In Each of Us.
2. Moving from Conflict to Collaboration
3. Proactive Listening
4. Clarifying Customer Expectations
5. Resolving Customer Dissatisfaction
6. Influencing for Win-Win Customer Outcomes

Forging the Links is the introductory workshop/course designed for and with EPA by the ZM staff. Its purpose is to develop a strong awareness of the link between excellent service provision and the ability to meet our EPA mission objectives, and a clear understanding of our connections to one another as customers and suppliers of each other in EPA.

In addition, units such as Navigating Change, Giving and Receiving Feedback, Recognition, and Coaching are fine supplements to the six core skills courses. Any certified ZM facilitator can deliver the units. Further, the Customer Service Program offers videos and books on loan.

**Arnold Ondarza - Region 6:** Others have said we have a successful customer service program in Region 6. If this is true-- and I like to believe it is -- our success can be attributed to three things.

- Above all -- dedicated people who are charged up and committed; 20 certified facilitators; and others
- Persistence and training -- essential ingredients to success. We learned that through trial and error.

- Positive, frequent repetition -- in the customer service area this is important to get the message across.

**Nola Cooke - Region 8:** Region 8 is still at the starting gate and using this conference as a valuable tool to help inspire the Region to open the gate and start the race toward excellent customer service. Nola pointed to the luncheon presentation of Priscilla Evans as particularly valuable. Priscilla spoke on the importance, the value, and the benefits of keeping your eye on the goals.

**Rene Henry - Region 3:** We are making great strides in our Region.

- Handouts for all to use as they wish include (1) a matrix which highlights Region 3 goals, and (2) a memo from the Regional Administrators which direct the Region in meeting the goals.
- Judy Braunston was awarded the first Region 3, Customer Service Award.
- Everybody has been asked to attend FtL over the next 18 months with 500 to have participated by the end of 1998.
- Wayne Naylor is heading up assessments; Peter Schaul is heading up the CS workshops initiatives, and Larry Teller is leading the effort to integrate customer service in employee orientation and job interviews

**Mike O'Reilly - OPPT:** We are very thankful for having support from Lynn Goldman and other senior managers for our customer service program. There are many competing initiatives in OPPTS, but the belief that customer service is an integral part of our activities and doesn't compete for resources makes it work.

- A recent survey in OPP indicated an approval rate of 4.4 percent on a 10-point scale. While low, this information allows us to have a baseline to indicate how we are doing.
- In building an effective customer service program, we are involving staff at all levels and also the appreciative inquiry approach.
- Our training goals are to have participation by 500 employees by the end of 1998 and the rest by the end of 1999.
- Also, in the ideal customer service model, good internal customer service is essential or the "whole thing falls apart."
- In summary, we are building a four-layered pyramid of good customer service. In the pyramid, data are used to build information, information used to build knowledge, and knowledge to build wisdom. As the pyramid builds, so do skill and trust.

#### Discussion and Q's & A's

**Jim Downing:** - How do you get "them" -- scientists and others who are squirreled away and don't want to be bothered with customer service -- in the room for training?

- Make it fun, use branch-to-branch approach, customize for any group.
- Creative ideas for participants in Region 6 -Great Tomasini, Miss Piggy, give-aways such as mechanical pencils, and pens.
- Have "workshops," but not "training."
- From Nan Parry (ORD): To make customer service (training) more attractive in ORD, we are integrating it into our "highly professional" independent peer review process and onto the ORD WEB site. That way, customer service will give our scientists name recognition and our engineers problem solving recognition. For our hard-working researchers, recognition once in a while is truly appreciated.

**Recorder:** George Walker - OPPE



## **Guidelines for Customer Service Feedback and Measurement**

**Moderator:** Peter Durant, Associate Director, office of Resources Management and Administration, Office of Research and Development (ORD)

### **Panelists:**

Pat Bonner - Customer Service Program (CSP)  
Charlotte Cottrill - ORD  
George Walker - CSP  
Michael Binder - Office of the Inspector General

### ***Why Guidelines?* - Pat Bonner**

- Results of EPA surveys could not be compared
- There was no overall satisfaction question on many surveys
- Results from many of the nearly 40 surveys done between 1993 and 1997 had not been analyzed
- The Agency is planning for as many as 900 surveys during the next three years, using approximately 150 survey instruments
- There is a need to assure that surveys are
  - useful and used, and that we
  - apply a uniform approach to doing surveys

### ***Progress***

In February, the CSP held a Workshop to brainstorm the content of feedback and measurement guidelines, the tool to help meet the goals of comparable, useful surveys, etc. A draft has been developed, as well as an awareness raising brochure (in Conference registration packet). The Guidelines will describe a five-step process outlined following by other members of the panel.

## **PLAN, CONSTRUCT, CONDUCT, ANALYZE, ACT**

### **PLAN - Charlotte Cottrill**

- critical to success of the survey
- define objectives and determine how you will use the findings - this is vital!
- must have clear objectives to have a successful survey. This will save money!
- continuous improvement process - don't ask everything on your first survey
- go for focused, quality info

### **CONSTRUCT - George Walker**

- important to construct good survey in order to receive useful data
- guidelines contain extensive help to construct a survey
- general format
- checklist on data collection
- important to develop good questions - there is help on this in the guidelines. We have pretested questions.

- OMB clearance - this process has been streamlined

**CONDUCT** - George Walker

- prior to survey think about purpose
- many methods for collecting data - surveys are not the only option

**ANALYZE and ACT** - Michael Binder

- need good information in order to analyze
- data is meaningless without analysis
- analysis tools - examples
- different types of data - usefulness of stratified data
- we are trying to lead and create change with the information we learned from the survey
- must SELL our findings in a positive way in order to lead to CHANGE (graphs, Pictures, etc.)

***GPRA and CUSTOMER SERVICE*** - Michael Binder

- this is the way we will be doing business in the government
- greater effectiveness of programs
- mandates CS feedback about programs and service quality
- must be part of strategic plan and planning

***INTERNAL CONTROLS*** - Michael Binder

- ensure integrity of info and the data
- info must be accurate and objective

Recorder: Elizabeth Harris - OSWER

## **Learning from the Best**

(Audio tapes for each of the five topics include both sessions.)

**Session Name and Time:** Hotlines and Call Centers (1:00 pm)

**Moderator:** Tom Reich, Water Quality Protection Division (Region 6)

**Featured Speaker:** Larry Stuker, Supervisor, National Call Center, Federal Communications Commission, Gettysburg, PA 717-338-2740 or [lstuker@fcc.gov](mailto:lstuker@fcc.gov)

### **Key Questions of the Speaker:**

#### **How do you demonstrate worth to agency management?**

**Response:** Show cost of poor customer service (inefficiency, duplication, high-level staff time on telephone, no central database or repository, continuously research same issues, lack of control, no complaint database, congressional and upper management involvement, no assurance all customers are satisfied, and little data to show agency efforts) as compared to advantages of call center (can eliminate wastefulness of decentralized approach).

#### **What training is available for setting up and managing a call center?**

**Response:** Every Call Center manager needs to go through "call center boot camp" to learn the basics of available equipment and management techniques for making a call center do its job. A good one is the Incoming Calls Management Institute in Annapolis, Maryland ([www.incoming.com](http://www.incoming.com)). They offer classes on the essentials (equipment/ techniques) of call centers and on leadership and management.

#### **What are the essentials for setting up and running an effective call center?**

**Response:** The number one essential for setting up a call center is management buy-in and the second thing is education on the call center industry. The most important element in running an effective call center is the staff. Must "delight" staff and show management the value of the call center. Dissatisfied staff does not usually result in satisfied customers.

#### **How do you insure that staff are handling customers properly? What are your quality assurance techniques?**

**Response:** The most important safeguard is customers requesting to speak to the manager when they are not satisfied. Call monitoring can be used but does require working with the union and special authority. Some agencies (IRS and SSA) have had problems with improper or over-monitoring in the past.

#### **Questions not Answered Due to Lack of Time:**

- What incentives or motivation is used to encourage quality performance of call center staff when they are federal employees? When they are contractors?
- How are complaints about the call center staff handled?
- Is there any follow up on calls referred to other agency staff to respond? If so, how is that done?
- How are callers satisfied when FCC has no power to do what customer wants (due to no authority)?

## **Important Ideas from the Discussion:**

Definition: The unit that answers all questions and takes all complaints for the organization. The call center industry is now using the term "**customer care**".

Education/Training: Staff must understand available equipment and what it can do (automatic call distribution, Expert Advisor software, Erlang B & C for call forecasting and toll free costs)

Agency Issues: Tools that are vital to the center's success include a database with appropriate responses/solutions to commonly asked questions and complaints, and an experts listing of people who **will** respond to callers. To prepare the database, staff must work with agency experts to get accurate information, asking that the expert develop it or review what the call center staff prepare based upon information the experts provide.

Benchmark: If you are opening a call center, benchmark – don't reinvent; get position descriptions and procedures from other agencies.

Establish Call Load: call forecasting = number of calls X the sum of talk time occupancy (lines busy) and service level. It is important to track the time callers are on hold or get a busy signal (ask them) so there is a full justification for staffing requirements to meet standards set for the center re: timely answering.

Customer Service Standard: FCC uses 80% of calls answered within 20 seconds or three rings.

Management Tool: From the start, it is important to collect data from customers about the quality of service they receive and what they expect. That information must be translated into actionable recommendations for improvement. A database to capture information and analyze it is essential.

Mission Creep: There is a tendency for the Call center staff to take on other assignments must have time to do this job well so managers must avoid taking on unrelated extra work

Partner with a University: If you are lucky enough to be able to obtain interns, have them do evaluation/analysis; try to use the same institution for providing training/education benefits for employees

Siting of call center: If you have the luxury of deciding on ANY location, use pathfinder.com on Internet to find best locations and work with local government/Chamber of Commerce to get benefits for siting a large facility in their area

Value of Call Center: Call center staff and the others in the agency must understand where they fit into the Organization, and the center must continually show its worth to the rest of the agency

Toll Free Lines: They provide easy, direct access, but some agencies are afraid to set them up because of cost. They fear that toll free lines may invite strange callers and those who only want to talk or complain and who really have no business with the agency but do

have the capability to block other legitimate calls. When it is clear that someone is repeatedly calling and abusing the toll free line, a manager should be asked to address the problem with the caller.

Larry Stuker's phone number is (717) 338-2740; call him with any additional questions.

**How can EPA use this Information?**

- There are many similarities between agency mission and kinds of customer concerns complaints that would help EPA in managing a national or regional or organizational call centers.
- The FCC implements complex congressional mandates through highly technical regulations that are not always understood by the regulated industry or the public.
- Close coordination between call center staff and agency experts is essential. Agency experts must see value in call center and understand their role to ensure this coordination.
- FCC does not have the authority to do many things that customers may want (change violation penalties, reduce telephone/cable costs) just as EPA lacks authority to do things that the public, the regulated industry, or others might want.
- Since EPA currently does not have funding for a national call center, regions and program offices should evaluate the feasibility of the call center option as an important element of efforts to meet customers' needs for information as well as a means of establishing a easily accessible complaint system (and database) as required by Executive Order 12862 on Customer Service.

**Any Commitments to Follow-up Action at EPA:** No time to address this issue in Session.

**Recorder:** Betty Winter - Region 4

**Session Name and Time:** Hotlines and Call Centers (2:00 pm)

**Moderator:** James McDonald, Office of Congressional & Intergovernmental Relations

**Featured Speaker:** Larry Stuker, Supervisor, National Call Center, Federal Communications Commission, Gettysburg, PA 717-338-2740 or [lstuker@fcc.gov](mailto:lstuker@fcc.gov)

**Key Questions of the Speaker:**

- How do you sell the idea of a call center?
- How best do you access the necessary information to give to callers?
- How do you determine who your customers are?
- How do you avoid "mission creep?"
- How do you decide on equipment purchases and the hiring of staff?
- How do you train?
- What do you do with the data you collect from your customers?

**Important Ideas from the Discussion:**

- Sell the idea of the need for a call center to your manager. You must have early "buy-in" from management.

- Develop an "expert adviser" software package (like our Yellow pages) and get "issue expert" approval on it.
- Do not reinvent the wheel to set up your call center. Do some benchmarking. Determine who has the best call centers and visit them. Benchmark against the best in the private sector. Learn to use the Internet to locate call centers. Establish site selection criteria.
- Avoid "mission creep" by establishing a mission and sticking to it. If additional jobs are added to a call center, efficiency deteriorates.
- Establish a service level and stick to it! Convince your boss that high "occupancy" is bad. Customers left on "hold" cost nine cents/minute. No more than 74% of your operators should be on the phone at any given time. Allow time for them to fill orders and call out to get necessary information.

#### **How Can EPA Use This Information?**

Larry Stucker heads a national hotline/call center for the FCC. His ideas are great and could be implemented if our Hotline is ever funded in Cincinnati. On a scaled down version, not quite so ambitious, all of his ideas work for any regional office. If there is no intention to fund a national number, his guidance could be used to set up hot lines in every region. It's not a hard thing to do....it just takes a committed funding stream and a few brave people willing to do the work

**Any Commitments to Follow-up action at the EPA?** None, but Larry Stucker gave out his name, phone number and e-mail address so that he could assist with any questions that may come up in the future.

**Recorder:** Judy Braunston - Region 3

**Session Name and Time:** Learning and Using Customer Expectations (1:00 pm)

**Moderator:** Rene Henry, Director, Office of Communications and Government Relations (Region 3)

**Featured Speaker:** Kevin Cullinane, U. S. Mint

**Key Questions of the Speaker:**

1. We have performance standards in place and a regular appraisal system; why isn't this enough?
2. Did you have problems with the union over bargaining unit employees and monitoring calls?
3. What training did you do; and how did you do it?
4. What customers did you survey and what did you ask?

**Important Ideas:**

1. To make customer service work you need to develop a baseline of how you're doing; continue to measure that against your goals and broadcast it no matter how bad you're doing. This is the only way to improve!
2. For the initial survey, the Mint did not have the expertise and so it contracted survey development out. Once they were satisfied and experienced with the instrument, they took it back inside. This was expensive (\$50K), but the only way to do it quickly and correctly.
3. The most important questions to ask in benchmarking business are what do you measure and what are your goals.
4. The Mint widely broadcasts a weekly report on what the customers are saying. Items that require immediate attention are passed on via telephone.
5. Every call is an opportunity to WOW the American people because their experience with local, state and federal government is so bad that oftentimes they have very low expectations even though they want excellent customer service.
6. Before the Mint started on its program, no one was responsible for answering the phone or responding to customer inquiries, complaints, etc.
7. To succeed, you need specific goals, measures and accountability.
8. The Mint has a weekly meeting, like a Weight Watchers weigh-in, where managers get together to celebrate their successes in meeting or exceeding customer service goals. This is also a moment of truth for those who don't. It creates great peer pressure to meet goals and generates ideas to help.

9. The Mint recognizes and rewards excellence in customer service in an ongoing way to make extraordinary service a routine behavior.

10. Two questions they ask themselves are: How many positive contacts do the American people have with their government? and, Have we let them down today??

11. Most of the resistance did not come from front line employees, but from front line supervisors. The union was no problem.

12. The Mint staff developed scripts for what they wanted people to say on a call. These were part of their training and included how to open, close and control a call as well as the specific content for different types of calls. Calls are periodically monitored by management.

13. The change process requires zealots.

14. You have to know what the problem is (measurement and goals) before you can fix it.

**How can EPA use this information?** No input

**Any commitments to follow-up action at EPA:** None

**Recorder:** Peter Schual - Region 3

**Session Name and Time:** Learning and Using Customer Expectations (2:00 pm)

**Moderator:** Steve Smith, Office of Research & Development (HQ)

**Featured Speaker:** Kevin Cullinane, U. S. Mint

#### **NOTES:**

Kevin Cullinane had a very effective and interesting presentation using transparencies and an overhead projector. Participants asked questions during the presentation. Only a few questions were asked, and (this was the second time that he presented the material) he used most of the time in the presentation. There were only a few minutes at the end of his second presentation for further questions.

#### **Key Questions of the Speaker:**

**Were the data used in the internal reports imported from a computer database, or from some other source?**

**Response:** The data are manually entered from logs and other sources for the reports.

**What sort of training did you use to train the staff in answering phones effectively?**

**Response:** We designed a one-day course that develops skills, and goes over do's and don'ts. The experienced staff are the trainers, who monitor role-plays, and provide constructive feedback to the trainees.



**How do you count the time elapsed in answering an incoming phone call?**

**Response:** The call comes into the system and the caller is given recorded options for response, depending on the customer's need(s). If the caller wants to talk to a person, they are instructed to hit "0". The time measured is from the moment the caller hits "0" until the staff member answers the phone.

**Do you track every piece of mail individually that comes into the system?**

**Response:** No, incoming mail is sorted into batches and batches are monitored.

**How applicable is the US Mint experience to EPA?**

**Response:** It is difficult to answer this question. Some actions are easier to track than others. For example, it is fairly easy to track how long it takes to fill a vacancy and to evaluate the process. This would apply to the Mint or to EPA. Other activities are more difficult to measure.

**Do you have management meetings and is there accountability?**

**Response:** Yes, we have regularly scheduled management meetings and managers are held accountable for performance. These meetings are very important.

**Recorder:** Steve Smith - ORD

**Session Name and Time:** Complaints to Compliments Session (1:00 pm)

**Moderator:** Sandy Hudnall, Director Executive Secretariat - Office of the Administrator

**Featured Speaker:** Maynard Malaby, Chief, Service Delivery Branch  
Social Security Administration (SSA)

**Key Questions of the Speaker:**

**How did you get managers to understand customer service, especially when you have got some managers in place who do not understand the idea of employee and customer satisfaction.**

**Response:** In the SSA, the culture is different from that in EPA in that customer service is the whole business of SSA. Managers understand this and it is put into their job descriptions.

**There are some people that won't understand or be courteous to the customer (bad days, poor attitude). What do you do?**

**Response:** In SSA it is in their performance appraisals and standards. We have management sit next to representatives to listen in on how they are handling their calls. We also provide customer response cards and conduct formal interviews with customers in our waiting rooms. In addition, appropriate behavior and courtesy is observed by walking about throughout the organization. Staff which answer public inquiries have interview audits to ensure that proper customer service is provided.

**How good is your feedback from the customers?**

**Response:** I don't do it, so I can't answer your question effectively, but there are annual written surveys and call in lines to provide feedback.

**What follow-up is there to your surveys?**

**Response:** They go through the SSA Regional Offices so that we at headquarters do not get a lot of them.

**People are often vocal about complaints, but not so about compliments, do you have the same problem?**

**Response:** No, we get lots of compliments or comments in our office of public inquiry.

**How do you handle the bad or angry customer attitude that result in 1300 complaints per year on rulings ( not on procedures ) from customers?**

**Response:** Prompt attention is paid to each complaint and each is answered. This demonstrates respect for the customer, although only very seldom can a ruling be changed.

**With the diversity of your customers, how do you handle responses?**

**Response:** A lot of our customers do not speak English, so we try to answer in a language they understand. We can also respond in braille for the vision impaired.

**Important Ideas from the Discussion:**

- Service is SSA's whole business (differs from EPA's multitude of services).

- Courtesy is the basis of Customer Service at SSA. This is SSA's organization culture.
- SSA rated #1 of all Government Agencies in telephone answering due to knowledgeable, courteous and personable responses answering 95% of questions the first time.
- SSA obtains monthly feedback from customers on how they are doing. This is reported back to managers monthly.
- CALL IT CUSTOMER FEEDBACK, NOT COMPLAINTS.
- Use appropriate language for response (Spanish, braille, etc.)

**How can EPA use this information?**

- Obtain feedback from more than just response cards (calls, interviews, etc.).
- Call it Customer Feedback (not complaints).
- Set up an infrastructure within EPA to handle customer service feedback.
- Ensure that knowledgeable staff respond to inquiries. First contact is key.

**Any commitments to follow-up action at EPA:**

Consider the above if EPA organizes a customer service feedback infrastructure.

**Recorder:** Barry Goldfarb - ORD

**Session Name and Time:** Complaints to Compliments Session 2 (2:00 pm)

**Moderator:** Sandy Hudnall, Director Executive Secretariat - Office of the Administrator

**Featured Speaker:** Maynard Malaby, Chief, Service Delivery Branch  
Social Security Administration (SSA)

**Key Questions of the Speaker:**

1. **How did you get your managers on board?**  
Top management is committed to Customer Service (CS). The CS program functions from the top down. The Social Security Administration (SSA) has a continuous comprehensive training program for management.
2. **Do you have specific training on how to be courteous with an especially difficult customer?**  
Yes! There are various videos in several different languages. The CS initiative is both a centralized and decentralized effort.
3. **Is the mentoring program formal or informal?**  
For new employees it's formal and lasts 2-12 months. The new employee, mentor, and manager determine training needs and time.
4. **Does the Social Security Administration have a reward/recognition program?**  
Those who provide good customer service get rewarded. The SSA does not however, provide competition incentives.

***Key Ideas:***

Customer service and courtesy are the same thing. The SSA hires individuals who smile and seem courteous. Then they provide 9-12 weeks of CS training. There are refresher training materials available and encouraged. Training programs are available on CD ROM.

This organization prides itself on its top management leading by example. CS is part of the appraisal system. It has been ingrained in the culture. Managers monitor by walking around. Interview audits help identify training needs.

**How can EPA use this information?**

- Integrate CS into performance standards.
- Establish a mentoring program on CS.
- Provide a lot of CS training both management and employee.
- Determine where EPA is with CS, and identify where the agency wants to be.
- Look at complaints as a gift for getting better.
- Use technology as a tool to make things easier for the customer.
- Conduct training for both management and employees.
- Recognize quality service.

***Any commitments to follow-up at EPA?***

One: Request a copy of Critical Job Elements from the Social Security Administration.

Recorder: Shelley Levitt - OSWER

**Session Name and Time:** Integrating Customer Service with Reinvention (1:00 pm)

**Moderator:** James McDonald, Office of Congressional & Intergovernmental Affairs

**Featured Speaker:** Carlton W. Roarke, US Postal Service

**Key Questions of the Speaker:**

- What type of customer surveys were used?
- What about the challenges of culture change?
- How do you respond to "local post office" inquiries with the nationwide USPS "1-800" USPS call center?
- Why did the USPS outsource the call centers?
- How are you impacted by GPRA?
- What are you held accountable for?

**Important Ideas from the Discussion:**

- The Post Master General, Marvin Runyeon, traveled out to the field to experience the quality of the USPS customer service effort.
- Focus groups are a key vehicle for obtaining customer feedback.
- It is critically important to not only take customer complaints but to respond in a timely manner in order to complete the transaction.
- The USPS set a goal of successfully closing 85% of all customer inquiries.
- Ongoing measurement of customer satisfaction is critical to program success.
- Internal marketing to USPS staff and "partnership training" are key ingredients of the successful program.
- Creating a customer service ethic requires culture change. Therefore, culture change must be factored into any successful customer service initiative.

**How can EPA use this information?**

The information gathered from this session will be helpful, generally, as we implement the Agency customer service program and, specifically, as EPA develops new initiatives to enhance public access to EPA information and publications. The experience of the USPS in implementing the "call center" concept will be very helpful as the Agency considers how to manage its diverse array of hotlines and becomes more responsive to consumer inquiries.

**Any commitments to follow-up action at EPA:**

Yes. Utilize information from this session as input for the Public Access Subgroup.

**Recorder:** Michael O'Reilly - OPPTS

**Session Name and Time:** Integrating Customer Service with Reinvention (2:00 pm)

**Moderator:** Mary Louise Uhlig, Director, Office of Program Management (OPPTS)

**Featured Speaker: Carlton Roarke, US Postal Service**

In 1992, the Postal Service became a corporation. The Postal Service has been in the black for the last 3 years. The Postal Service is completely self supporting with their own revenues. It receives no support from taxes.

Until recently, the customer focus was directed at the customer that entered a post officer rather than the phone customer. The Postal Service is now also focusing on the phone customer via call centers. The Postal Service is initiating both national and field efforts to eliminate inconsistencies and unreliable information, and reduce operational inefficiencies.

The vision for the call centers is threefold: a single 800 number; offering a broad range of services; and 24 hour/7 days per week operation. Initially, the call center network will require a substantial financial investment but will become a revenue generator.

With the call centers, instead of the local numbers for each city, the customer service goal is that 8 out of 10 customers are satisfied. A goal is that 80% of calls are answered within 20 seconds. The call center will allow individual post office employees to efficiently run those local operations while the call center employees focus on the calls. The call centers will promote direct selling, up selling, and will generate revenues.

There will be 6 national call centers. Some calls will be transferred to the local post office where the customer would go to obtain that service. The call center network will handle 200 million calls annually. The customer base for the Postal Service is current customers, customers that left but will return due to improved and better service, small businesses, and not/non-profit organizations.

The Postal Service states that customers that wait and can complain will return but those customers that never get through to you are lost. Thus their focus on the call centers are its operational efficiencies.

The Postal Service expects to receive the following types of calls in its call centers:

- informational (This kind of call can be handled by a the software package)
- sales and service
- and service resolution. (As an example, you will now be able to call and put your mail on hold rather than personally going to the post office and filling out a form.)

**Key Questions of the Speaker:**

**Which call centers are now open?**

**Response:** Currently only the West Coast. This operation is staffed from Denver. The other 5 call centers will open within the next 2 years.

**What is the skill level of the operators?**

**Response:** The call centers are outsourced. There is training and the operators are supported by software developed specifically for the call centers. 100% of call center employees are not Postal Service employees.

**Within the government system, how are you able to staff the call centers?**

**Response:** The Postal Service is not a government agency. Thus the procurement systems are different. Business runs the call centers with their employees. They are again supported by an extensive software package. The Postal Service estimates that the call center will be able to answer 85% of the questions. The remain 15% will be directed to the appropriate local post office. The Postal Service has a goal of maintaining excellent relations with each call center. The Postal Service will work with the call centers to develop a seamless process for the customer and for working with the local post office. Again, through surveys the Postal Service will measure the success and customer satisfaction.

**How was the software developed and purchased?**

**Response:** Based on customer surveys, the Postal Service developed the services that were to be addressed by the call centers. The Postal Service identified 4 software vendors. These vendors described their specific expertise to the Postal Service, and the appropriate vendor was selected.

**What is on the data base?**

**Response:** Data such as rates (for various types of mail and various destinations), services the local post office offers (stamps, flags, mail hold, etc.), hours, etc. The call centers can also connect the caller directly to their local post office if needed.

**How has the Postal Service developed the call centers?**

**Response:** The Postal Service works extensively with customer groups to improve service and design new services such as the call center. The Postal Service focuses on industry standards, bench marking, and being world class in addressing customer service. The call center was designed using customer service groups and is measured using customer satisfaction groups. In order to go to best-in-class, focus groups are essential. For the Postal Service, measurement, measurement, and measurement are the ways to achieve excellent customer service. The Postal Service uses surveys to measure customer focus and customer satisfaction. The Postal Service has 2 learning centers for the call centers where they conduct focused surveys in order to better understand the needs of the customer and to improve the baseline processes and operations at the call centers.

The building blocks of the call centers are: program measurement (customer service cost a lot, you need to know that it is worth it); systems technology and data network; organizational linkage of the call center staff with the field post offices; and operations and human resources at the call centers.

The call centers needed to address agent/supervisor training; organizational design; and staffing. Note that none of the center staff were to be postal employees. Thus training on the Postal Service way of operating and focus on customer service is essential.

Staffing for the centers will be (based on peak operation):

- 2 centers will be operating 24 hrs/day
- Each of those centers will employ 500 people
- 4 centers will be operating 12 hrs/day
- Each of those centers will employ 300 people
- The maximum number of employees at the call centers will be 2,200.

**What are the expected rates of burn out for call center agents?**

**Response:** The Postal Service expects a 20% burn out rate. However, each center will be located in a large metropolitan area. There will be other call centers located in these areas. It is expected that agents will rotate from various call centers. Thus, a stable call center workforce is projected.

**What has been the time frame for establishing the call centers?**

**Response:** Since 1992, customer service and the development of the call centers have been the #1 focus at the Postal Service. With the establishment of all call centers in about two years, the customer service focus will still be a #1 goal.

**Recorder:** Steve Smith - ORD



**Session Name and Time:** Benchmarking Customer Satisfaction - Session I (1:00 pm)

**Moderator:** Mary Louise Uhlig, Director, Office of Program Management (OPPTS)

**Featured Speaker:** Cathy Kern, Commerce, Patent and Trade Office (PTO)  
(703-305-4203)

PTO used an Interagency Coordination Council in its efforts to build a customer service culture, develop methods and an overall strategy. World Class Courtesy is its underlying concept. Standards were based on information from customers. Bureau of Census helped with their survey work - a generic survey form was developed (EPA could use it); it gets at some of the GPRA goals.

PTO has a Round table with its partners in industry sectors, uses focus groups to validate standards and performance, and believes that quality consciousness leads to reinventing.

**Recorder:** Jim Downing - OPPTS/OPP

**Session Name and Time:** Benchmarking Customer Satisfaction (2:00 pm)

**Moderator:** Rene Henry, Director, Office of Communications and Government Relations  
(Region III)

**Featured Speaker:** Cathy Kern, Commerce, Patent and Trade Office (PTO)

**Background:**

The Department of Commerce's Patents and Trademarks Office (PTO) is a growing office of 5000 employees which is fully fee-funded. It has three areas 1) Patent Processing 2) Trademark Processing and 3) Information/Dissemination. The mission statement states, in summary, "we lead the world in providing customer-valued intellectual property rights that spark innovation." The PTO values employees, customers and excellence in business and has a "can do" attitude. The PTO is performance-based driven. Its basic approach is to define the quality of services that customers need and expect.

Steps taken by PTO:

1. Identified Customers
2. Obtained Input from Customers
3. Set Service Standards
4. Determine Current level of Satisfaction that customers get to establish a base line.

Questions to the Customers -

- What do you need and expect?
- What are the big dissatisfiers that you hate or anger you?
- If you were commissioner for the day and you only could look at one key measure, which would it be?

Based on the answers, PTO set its standards knowing they were not in concrete and would need to be revisited from time to time – at least annually. PTO ensured that customer service standards were reflected in standards. PTO tries to survey once a year to measure improvement.

PTO ensures that employees have the equipment and the skills necessary to do quality work, provides customer awareness sessions for all employees, and took steps like offering flexi-place to improve the quality of the work place.

The Patent Office developed its own strategic plan, "Help Customers Get Patents" and goals:

- Increase customer satisfaction to 75 percent by the end of 1999.
- Phone calls will be returned in one business day.
- Phone calls will be directed promptly and to the proper office
- Conduct thorough patent searches.
- Talk to the customer in plain English.

Lessons learned:

- Communication, involvement, flexibility are important.
- There are linkages
- There will be resistance.

#### **Key Questions of the Speaker:**

**Did the standards change by the validation of the customers?**

**Response:** PTO is going out every year to validate (information at this time is not conclusive), and does benchmark to refine processes. The customer focus sessions were not Benchmarking sessions. Employees are valued and rewarded.

**Did the survey go out each year to the same customers?**

**Response:** No, and the response rate was from 40 to 50 percent.

**Who prepared survey?**

**Response:** PTO used a generic Census survey and adapted it for PTO use.

**Recorder:** Judi Doucette - OCFO

## **The Launching Pad – Planning to Act**

(These breakout sessions were not taped)

### **ANCHORING CUSTOMER SERVICE**

The following reflects the flip charts from a group exercise at EPA's first National Customer Service Conference in Plano, Texas.

#### **Gather data:**

- Research Programs -- e.g. TQM did not work. Why was it not successful?
- Survey People -- e.g. Who would implement the surveys?
- Ask other Agencies -- Benchmark
- Surf the Internet -- e.g. Internet
- Ask Best in the Class -- e.g. Private Sector .. Hotel

#### **Questions to be asked:**

- How do they measure customer service improvement?
- How did they communicate customer service implementation?
- How do they validate customer service standards?
- What kinds of awards and incentives do they have?

#### **Data gathered from the Hotel, American Airlines Counter, EPA, SBA:**

How does the hotel measure customer service improvement?

##### **Hotel:**

- ▶ "We are in the customer service business!"
- ▶ We have survey comment cards that are delivered to the room prior to checkout.
- ▶ The standards are 46% exceeds expectations ratings by our customers.
- ▶ Restaurant, housekeeping, SVS are rated.
- ▶ We give incentives (employee) awards.
- ▶ Weekly feedback to Department heads on the survey results, etc.
- ▶ Customers are directly contacted if negative comments are received for more details.

##### **EPA:**

- ▶ Baseline data collection
- ▶ Survey comment cards (sent to customers via the mail)
- ▶ Telephone feedback
- ▶ Monthly/Quarterly Reports looking at qualitative and quantitative feedback

##### **American Airlines:**

- ▶ Monitor 20 phone calls per quarter to ensure high quality customer service.
- ▶ Customer Service representatives are empowered to resolve problems
- ▶ No written standards, but they are based on personal judgment/common sense.
- ▶ There is an extensive screening process in hiring employees with outstanding customer service skills.
- ▶ No awards system, but customer service is in the Performance Standards.

### **Small Business Administration -- Emergency Assistance**

- Feedback from: Upper management, town meetings, monitor phone calls, other state agency feedback, complaint system.

### **Proposed Anchoring Strategy**

1. Obtain resources for Customer Service.
2. Keep Management Involved.
3. Institute a culture that reflects Customer Service is our business and that Customer Service is NOT an option.
4. Institute customer service performance objectives in employee performance standards.
5. Monitor employee performance.
6. Get EPA employee buy-in that Customer Service is NOT flavor of the month -- but that it is here for the long term.
7. Keep awards and incentives.
8. Get staff involvement.
9. Institute training program at the corporate office, and at both the management and staff levels. Need buy-in at all levels of the agency.

Recorder: Pat Eklund - Region 9

### **VISION**

This group was asked to respond to three items:

- What do you see as the 5 year vision for EPA's Customer Service effort?
- Try to describe this in both words and/or visuals (a graphic pictorial representation)
- How will you measure the success of the vision?

After much brainstorming ----- the following vision was proposed.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE IN THE YEAR 2003:** The EPA's vision for customer service is driven by the desire to be recognized as a leader in customer service. This leadership role can be achieved through creating and maintaining an Agency culture which is anchored in customer service. This evolution must be an inclusive process involving our customers. By becoming a leader in Customer service, we will foster partnerships in environmental protection instead of adversarial relationships.

Recorder: Steve James - ORD/Cincinnati

### **LEADERSHIP**

The individuals in this group were asked to respond to the following question:

**What can we do in our own organizations to encourage one another to be effective leaders of Customer Service and change?**

The group recommended the following:

- Ensure top Management buy in - Lead by Example, and model the behavior.
  - Identify positive aspects
  - What will happen if they do not act?
    - may be forced to implement
    - Congressional intervention/ OMB
  - Training Programs - heighten awareness of vision and goals of customer service
- Identify Goals and Priorities
  - Ask customers what is important to them (internal and external)
  - Can management show some cost savings?
  - Survey customers as to their needs
  - Incorporate customer needs into your plans and budgets
  - Have dedicated people carry out plans
  - Include customer service as part of performance standards
  - Have top HQ official(s) send out a memo to delegate doing customer service
  - Establish methodologies
- Understand customer needs
  - Survey groups
  - State/EPA meetings
  - Establish trends by tracking calls (software available - see Superfund Ombudsmen)
  - Assure access to information
  - Provide timely and accurate responses
  - Need to listen effectively
  - Customer baseline needs, establish priorities (External and Internal)
- Develop communications plan to reach staff
  - Go to expert in organization
  - Send memo
  - Ask staff how they would like to be communicated to
  - Ensure that staff has opportunity to be part of the planning process
  - Look at existing communication techniques that work
- MODEL THE BEHAVIOR! MODEL THE BEHAVIOR! MODEL THE BEHAVIOR!

Recorder: Margaret Oldham - Region 6

### INTERNAL CAPACITY

The charge to this group was to answer the following questions:

- How can we continue to build and sustain internal capacity to deliver, implement, and maintain Customer Service based activities within EPA?
- What Obstacles might need to be addressed in order to do this?

The top four issues were identified using a multi-vote technique:

**1. Dollars (modest amount) (7)**

for: \* meetings \* conferences \* training \* awards  
 \* equipment \* consultants \* printing

**Obstacles:** No new \$ Management buy-in

**2. Top Management Buy-in (6+5)**

\* Plans and strategies for RA's and AA's  
 \* Recognition by Administrator  
 \* Administrator's Agenda

**Obstacles:** \* Mobility (Turnover)  
 \* Not part of Performance Standards  
 \* Lack of understanding/motivation

**3. Publicity on Customer Service through Agency Web-site Sharing - Hot-links (6+7)**

\* Lessons Learned \* Customer Service Report (attractive)  
 \* EPA @ Work \* Customer Service Newsletter

**Obstacles:** \* Lack of Resources  
 \* Lack of Marketing

**4. Set up Customer Service Advisory Board (ala-Science Advisory Board) (5)**

\* Need leader for FACA \* Funding for Board \* Staff  
 \* Alternative: Customer Service Network

**Obstacles:** \* FACA \* \$ \* Staffing

**Other Recommendations: (multi-vote results for other)**

- Training + Re-Training (4)
- Internal Management Reviews (Customer Service) (4)
- Incentive Programs for Customer Service, Awards/Atta-Boys, etc (4)
- Establish Grassroots Support Representatives from each Branch (3)
- Performance Standards (2)
- Contractors & Grantees (2)

- Training Contractors & Grantees (2)
- Mystery Caller Test (2)
- FTEs (1)
- Union Involvement (0)

Recorder: Tom Reich - Region 6

### CONVERSATIONS WITH AMERICA (CWA)

The group attending the Conference break-out was asked to address three questions:

- What activities, strategies, initiatives can you identify to support and deliver the President's "Conversations With America" mandate?
- What obstacles must be overcome to successfully implement this mandate?
- What do we want to do?

### Strategy/Activities (Time frame: Strategy due May 25)

- Inventory current activities (Administrators Calendars, Public Meeting, Conferences, Forums)
- Do gap analysis to see what's missing
- Increase use of Sector Based Indicatives
- Use/capture all information from Public Meetings, including ideas from the above (Sector Based Initiatives)
- Use Non-Traditional Sources -- check with others who serve EPA customers
- Target sectors through trade groups
- Use CSSC, ROCs, Customer Service Councils, Earth Day events, to brainstorm ideas
- Enlist Customer Service Conference Group (participants) to brainstorm opportunities for "conversations"
- Obtain RA, DRA, AA and top level support
- OECA - SECTOR GROUPS meeting in July may be a place to brainstorm
- Internal EPA meetings (any staff meeting, DRAs, Monday Senior Staff mention, Division Directors sessions, etc) should be used for surfacing opportunities for "conversations"

### Obstacles/barriers

- EPA staff may assume they know what Customers need, and ignore CWA ("We know better")
- Must be careful with CWA not to create unrealistic expectations
- Lethargy/Inertia keeping staff from making and using opportunities for CWA
- "We are already doing it!" -- the feeling that EPA does enough CWA. (We need to ensure that we give credit where it's due....capture and catalog what we are already doing on a regular basis to provide context to NPR and ourselves. Then we can simply highlight the EXTRA-ORDINARY events from month to month.)
- Where are the \$ to do anything extra? The Strategy needs to rely on piggybacking the core CWA questions into regular activities with our customers

- Statutory limitations – are there any to limit this effort?
- Omissions from Inventory, Attitude/"Real Problems" – people may hold back information in case being part of the CWA would mean more work
- Language (Plain English & Non-English) – we need to keep reminding EPAers that there are many people who have English as a second language, and plenty of others who won't relate to technobabble

#### What are we going to do?

- Core Group develops draft strategy for CSSC - Sandy Germann - OR, Mike Scott - OCEMR, Rene Henry - Region 3, Pat Bonner - OP, Anna Raymond - OIA
- Use the CSSC and other contacts to get CWA on the agendas of:  
 LGAC - EPA State & Local Office  
 Teacher associations - Environmental Ed Office/Stam Laskowski.  
 States, ECOS, NGA, Nat. Conf. Of Mayors, ICMA, Governor's Task Forces and Advisory Councils etc - Anna Raymond  
 Tribes - Tribal Office in OW  
 FACAs - ???  
 Environmental Justice Groups -OECA staff
- Try to reach out to  
 Grantees - How to reach project officers?  
 Permittees - Permits Core Process plan to work with states/program and regional offices  
 Those inspected - OECA  
 Licensees - OPP  
 Communities - Superfund, CBEP/OSEC, OWOW  
 OW - Clean Water Action Plan work
- Use surveys and Feedback Cards - Hot lines/FOIA officers and others planning surveys
- Other funders of environmental/CBEP/etc work - Foundation on Foundations might help to pinpoint issues of public concern
- Look for other agency partners that serve the same customers to cooperate with in CWA - both activities and financing

Recorder: Pat Bonner -CSP/OPPE



## Launching Pad

(Session not recorded)

**Moderator:** Derry Allen, Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation

Derry Allen asked each remaining participant to commit to doing something specific once back in the office, comment on something memorable or particularly helpful during the conference, or suggest how the next conference could be improved.

- Region 6 is doing a great job. The rest of us need more visibility from Region 6 senior leaders there on why customer service improvement is important for them. That information may help us better craft our own proposals to managers.
- Immigration & Naturalization Service staff thanked EPA for including them "in the huddle."
- Customer service is seen as 10% of the job, and Environmental Protection as 90%. How do we blend ensure that everyone can blend customer service into our daily job of Environmental Protection? (an attitude, not an add-on)
- There was concern about how much work there is ahead to do to improve customer service. Where do we find the time to do it?
- Some people wished the Conference had happened sooner. They found that though EPA (and others) did some things right, there were a lot of pitfalls we could have avoided.
- Going to send the boss e-mail on the spirit of the conference and go through the Region 6 awards system. (I) will push to have my region get staff trained on CS.
- Urge that there be annual conferences to focus on lessons learned.
- Building capacity is something to continue.
- Impressed with people here. Everyone should talk with 2-3 people about conference.
- Give briefings on what happened here back at office.
- Many said they had long "To do Lists".
- There is complaints management software located at the Superfund ombudsmen's offices. Everyone should look at it and if interested make changes to customize the software, and use.
- Urge that ombudsmen across the country be included in customer service activities.
- Customer service improvement applies to a much broader group than administrative staff. Our focus is not what it should be....needs to be all-inclusive.
- Courtesy, Courtesy, Courtesy, take that back and apply it.
- Awards need to cover to SEE's and Contractors as well as EPA staff.
- Conference gave people encouragement. Team work is important. Customer service work will be easier with a group of people you can count on, so, establish a cross organizations group to help and encourage each other, and to lead the rest.
- Benchmarking from other organizations provided good, useful information. We should do more of it.
- Customer service improvement is a harder sell when you have to deal with scientists and engineers, but some of them in the Agency are catching on to it.
- Build customer complaint/opportunity program. Move staff around to deal with complaints, and train them to do it well.
- Be careful about being portrayed as negative. Lead with what anyone or any group is

doing well. Then build in improvement.

- Excited about the enthusiasm of everyone here. Need to set up Service Councils in all offices and regions, and then encourage managers to empower those councils.
- Impressed with the breadth of customer service activities across EPA and the other federal agencies showcased at the conference.
- "If it will be, it's up to me." It takes each person's commitment to carry out change.
- Look for trends in phone calls, chart the changes.
- Keep reminding myself.....daily.... I am not alone in wanting and trying to improve customer service. Use the contacts.
- The Region 6 group's enthusiasm is infectious, and they exemplify the courtesy we should all exercise.
- Try calling customer service training customer service workshops.
- Need senior leadership, but if it's not visible and vocal, don't let that stop us.
- Customer service improvement is the cornerstone of reinventing government.
- State representative – State director should take lead role in customer service improvement and may try to organize interagency task force on customer service between Gov/EPA/others.
- Remind staff on the voice mail standards, and call them -- institute "mystery Caller programs wherever possible.
- Start small and get successes. People can be overwhelmed with too many items to implement at once.
- Each of us should try to lead the effort in our own way, set an example (model behavior) and be sure to respond quickly to inquiries.
- Customer service begins at home. Take good ideas and figure out how to apply in office.
- Inspired by EPA's efforts. There is another resource for feedback--the States, they should be working (and are) on customer service improvements too since they implement EPA programs.
- Give and get continuous feedback.
- Remember how important a "CAN DO" attitude is. Cynicism is still there despite attempts up to now, even in Region 6. Need to adapt the Region 6 positive approach to HQ culture.
- It's not what we say, it is what we do.

Recorder: Pat Eklund - Region 9

## Speakers' Profiles

### DAY ONE

**Keynote Speaker: Robert Stone**, Principal Deputy Director of Vice President Gore's National Partnership for Reinventing Government

Bob Stone leads the Clinton/Gore initiative to reinvent the federal government. He was recruited by the Vice President in 1993 from the Pentagon where he started a quality revolution, improved the standard of living for military men and women, and was acclaimed by Tom Peters as one of the top public sector managers in America. Bob translates the Clinton/Gore decisions on reinventing government into results, which include reducing the federal workforce by 350,000 to its lowest level in 30 years, saving \$137 billion, starting a customer service revolution in government, eliminating 16,000 pages of regulations, and treating businesses and communities like partners, not adversaries. He develops initiatives to restore trust in government, generating over 1,000 positive press stories. In 1993, with the help of an inter-agency team of 250, he led the way in producing the first reinventing government report, which became a commercial best-seller, and was called the best management book in America in 10 years. From 1980 to 1993, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Installations and forged partnerships with our top military leaders to streamline and invigorate management of 700 military installations worldwide, and to improve quality of life for American service men and women. Bob started the model installation program, which revolutionized operation of military bases by substituting local authority and enthusiasm for bureaucracy and regulations. He created, in collaboration with Congress, the strategy for closing military bases by commission, leading to savings of \$5 billion per year. He managed a \$30 billion annual budget and testified at congressional hearings on construction, base operations, base closures, quality of military life, readiness, small business, and environmental protection. He negotiated with foreign governments to strengthen NATO forces. Bob has positions of increasing responsibility in personnel and systems analysis. From 1969 to 1980, he was with the Department of Defense and led major defense-wide analyses that laid the groundwork for increasing the Army's anti-tank capacity by a factor of 10, doubling the number of women in the military, and reassessing the balance between the US and Soviet ground forces. Bob holds a BS and MS in Chemical Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

**Welcome: Jerry R. Clifford**, Acting Regional Administrator for Region 6, USEPA

Jerry has been with the EPA since 1978 and has served the Agency well in several positions. He has been Director, Superfund Division, Region 9; Director, Site Remediation Enforcement at HQs; Acting Deputy Director, Office of Waste Programs Enforcement; and Director, Hazardous Site Control Division. He assisted with Superfund Reauthorization efforts and the Superfund Reform Bill introduced in 1994. He holds an MS in Environmental Engineering from the University of Florida in 1977, received his BS in Wildlife Ecology in 1974, is a strong supporter of environmental education, volunteerism, administrative reform.

**EPA and Customer Service: Frederick "Derry" Allen**, Counsel to the Assistant Administrator, Office of Policy, USEPA Headquarters

Derry has served at EPA since 1978, where he has held a variety of positions, principally in the Office of Policy (formerly Policy, Planning and Evaluation). He started his present assignment in July 1998. He has also been Senior Policy Advisor to the Assistant Administrator for Policy, Planning and Evaluation, Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Environmental Data, Deputy Director of the Science, Economics and Statistics Division and a number of other offices.

He has been involved in a wide range of environmental, management and communications issues for the Agency. He earned his BA with Honors at Yale University and his MBA at the Harvard Business School. He is active in several community organizations, and enjoys reading and outdoor sports.

**Luncheon Speaker: J. Charles "Chuck" Fox**, Associate Administrator, Office of Reinvention, USEPA (Named Assistant Administrator for Water, July 1998)

Chuck was named AA in February 1997, and directs the Agency's Common Sense Initiative, Project XL and other regulatory reinvention efforts. His Office is dedicated to finding cleaner, cheaper and smarter solutions to the environmental challenges facing the nation. Prior to coming to EPA, Chuck served as Assistant Secretary and Chief Operating Officer of the Maryland Department of the Environment. He has served with a number of non-profit environmental organizations including American Rivers, Friends of the Earth, and the Environmental Policy Institute. He has served on boards and as a consultant to the Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, and Maryland League of Conservation Voters. He holds a BS in Urban Geography from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and attended New York University in New York City.

**Conference Logistics: Arnold Ondarza**, Chair, Region 6 Customer Service Council, USEPA

Arnold, who was recently appointed as the Superfund Ombudsman for Region 6, is Chairman of the Customer Service Council for the Region, and is an Alternative Dispute Resolution Specialist. Previously, he was the Acting Chief of the RCRA Programs Branch and Chief of the Administrative and Technical Support Section. Prior to EPA, Arnold worked for the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the US Department of Labor. He holds a Masters degree in Economics.

**Building Capacity for Change: Ken Wright**, USEPA, Internal Consultant, Organization Change and Development and **Carol Crawford**, USEPA, Internal Consultant, Organization Change and Development

Ken has worked at the EPA for twenty-three years. He has co-chaired the Federal Government's Interagency Advisory Group for Training and Development. He has worked for Vice President Gore's reinvention office in establishing the Cultural Change Consortium. Ken has consulted in the private sector, published internationally, spoken at many National Conferences and taught at the University of Virginia. Ken holds a degree in Social Science, MA in Education, an MS in Counseling and Organization Development from Johns Hopkins University. He is a graduate of Georgetown's Organization Development Certification Program. He is certified in Myers Briggs, is a Agency Master Trainer for Zenger-Miller and Career Development Programs. Ken enjoys reading, gardening, watercolors and college sports.

Carol has 25 years of Federal experience in the fields of education and change management. She has worked at the Treasury and Energy Departments, and was an Industrial Engineer in human dynamics for the US Postal Service. She taught a range of courses in English Literature and Composition at the University of Maryland and The American University. She holds an MA in English. She is licensed by the State of Maryland as a job counselor, is certified in Myers-Briggs, is certified in the full Zenger-Miller course range, and in EPA's updated Career Management Program. She spends free time with her family and 3 dogs.

**Best Practices; "Learning From the Best"**

**Hotlines and Call Centers:** Larry Stuker, Supervisor, Federal Communications Commission National Call Center

Larry has served on the Agency's Call Center Design Team. He received his BA from Long Beach State and attended graduate school at Colorado State. He is a former naval officer who served as a Lieutenant Commander on General Norman Schwarzkopf's staff during Operation Desert Storm.

**Integrating Customer Service with Reinvention:** Carlton Roarke, Program Manager for Quality Assurance, Training & Measurement Activities, Call Center, US Postal Service

Carlton is with the US Postal Service Marketing Infrastructure organization. He has been the Program Manager for quality assurance, training & measurement activities for the Call Center venture of the Postal Service for the past year and 9 months. He has served with the Postal Service for 20 years, and began his career as a clerk in a field post office. He moved into management after a year and a half and has held positions in marketing, mail processing facilities, at a branch post office and as manager of a branch post office. A native of Texas, he graduated from Texas Midwestern State University, at Wichita Falls, Texas. He skis all year around on the water and ice and has been very involved with the Lutheran Church since a child.

**Benchmarking Customer Satisfaction:** Cathy Kern, Director, Center for Quality Services, US Patent and Trademark Office (PTO)

Cathy has been with the PTO in positions of increasing responsibility for over 20 years. She has managed large-scale contracts, libraries, and high-volume production organizations. She has designed new methods for providing products and services to PTO customers, including the introduction of on-line search capability for customers wanting information on patents and trademarks. Her most recent assignments have provided her the opportunity to guide the PTO towards becoming a more customer focused organization. Working with core processes of the Agency, Cathy helped develop a comprehensive approach to identifying customers' needs, expectations and satisfaction rates for PTO products and services and incorporating that data in strategic, budget and re-engineering plans.

**Learning and Using Customers' Expectations:** Kevin M. Cullinane, Assistant Director for Customer Service, US Mint

Kevin is one of the emerging cadre of executives in government focused on the delivery of good customer service. He has 13 years experience in marketing with IBM Corporation and as Marketing Director of the US Mint. He spent part of his career in Germany and several years in the US Foreign Service in South America. For the past two years, he has successfully led an effort to reinvent customer service at the US Mint. The US Mint leads all government agencies in ratings of customer satisfaction according to the 1997 American Customer Satisfaction Index (ASCI) issued by the National Quality Research Center at the University of Michigan School of Business. Kevin is a graduate of St. Bonaventure University with a BA in Psychology, and holds an MA in Business Administration from Long Island University.

**Complaints to Compliments:** Maynard Malaby, Chief, Service Delivery Branch, Office of Public Service and Operations Support, Social Security Administration (SSA)

Maynard has more than 37 years of government service (20 with the US Army, 17 with SSA). He retired from the Army as a Major in the Adjutant General Corps with assignments as Chief of the Appointment Branch for the US Army Reserve Component Center in St. Louis, Missouri; Director of Personnel and Community Activities in Yongsan, Korea; Adjutant General, II Corps,

Military Advisory Group in Pleiku, Republic of Viet Nam in addition to other command and administrative assignments. With the SSA, Maynard has served as a teleservice center, claims and field representative; operations supervisor; assistant district manager; and program and management analyst. He holds a BA in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland, and an MS in Education from the University of Southern California.

**Voice of the Customer: Jim Makris, Moderator, Director, Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Office (CEPPO)**

Jim joined the EPA in 1985, and oversees the development and implementation of all chemical accident preparedness and prevention programs. In his capacity as Director, he has led efforts to reduce the likelihood and severity of chemical accidents as well reduce environmental risks in general. Jim also coordinates all joint prevention and preparedness efforts with Mexico and Canada, and co-chairs the US/Mexico and US/Canada Joint Response Teams. In addition, he has been instrumental in ensuring coordinated, non-duplicative efforts worldwide in the area of chemical emergency prevention and preparedness through his constant and concerted efforts with the European community and international organizations. He is a graduate of the University of New Hampshire, and earned a law degree from George Washington University.

**Panelists:**

**Judy Duncan, Director, Customer Services Division, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ)**

Judy is a native Oklahoman who holds a BS in Biological Sciences from Oklahoma State University. She has worked in environmental programs in Oklahoma since 1974. Her experience includes various administrative roles in the drinking water and waste water programs as well as supervision of the State's environmental laboratory. She notes that the ODEQ was one of the first state agencies in the nation to develop a customer assistance program. Their program has served as a model for other states. In addition to providing various customer assistance, information and outreach activities, the Customer Services Division serves as a focal point within the Agency for initiatives aimed at simplification of regulatory programs in Oklahoma.

**Charles Tippeconnic, Director of Programs, Fort Sill Apache**

Charles graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1985 with a degree in Petroleum Engineering. As Director of Programs for the Fort Sill Apache Tribe, he is responsible for the administration and management of all the programs operated by the Tribe. These programs include social services, education, environmental, economic development and Tribal government support services.

**Elaine Barron, M.D., President, El Paso County Medical Society, El Paso, TX**

Elaine has numerous professional and community affiliations which make her an excellent choice for representing a professional group on our Voice of the Customer Panel. She is the current Texas Advisory Board Member for the Environmental Defense Fund, is a current member of the Texas Water Development Board, Joint Advisory Committee Paso Del Norte Air Quality (also founding chairman of the Paso Del Norte Air Quality Task Force). She is currently Medical Director of the Transitional Unit at Rio Vista Rehabilitation Hospital. She is a graduate MD from Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Her list of accomplishments and affiliations is impressive. She is a children's advocate and zealously interested in environmental

concerns.

**Edward C. "Ned" Fritz**, Chair, Forest Task Force, Texas Committee on Natural Resources

Ned represents environmental groups for the panel. He is a member of the Board of Directors of Texas League of Conservation Voters, and is the Natural Area Preservation Association Secretary. He has received numerous awards, including the 1985 Sierra Club National Achievement Award, the 1988 National Friend of the Forest Award, the 1990 Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Award (by President Bush), a 1990 Special Recognition by the City of Dallas; 1992 Special Service Award by the Sierra Club, Lone Star Chapter, a 1992 Conservation Forester of the Year Award by Sportsmen Conservationists of Texas. Affiliated with National Wildlife Federation, Ned was awarded the Excellence in Environmental Awareness award for 1998. He has authored three books, numerous conservation and nature articles and holds a law degree from Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Edward began his interest in conservation at the age of 12 while passing merit badges to become an Eagle Scout.

**Rick Charter**, Vice President, Health, Safety and Environmental Services, Fina Oil and Chemical

Rick joined Fina in Dallas in July 1988. He has a varied background in areas of expertise which provide him a broad base from which to represent corporate environmental views. He worked with BASF Corporation for 15 years. His previous experience also includes a stint with Badische Corporation as a special assignments engineer at the acrylic fibers and yarns facility in Williamsburg, Virginia. He held several technical and operating positions and became Environmental Group Leader. He is certified in the Comprehensive Practice of Industrial Hygiene and is a member of the American Industrial Hygiene Association, The American Academy of Industrial Hygiene, the American Society of Safety Engineers, the Air and Waste Management Association, and is active in trade association activities including the Chemical Manufacturers Association and the American Petroleum Institute. He holds a BS in Chemical Engineering and an MS in Civil Environmental Engineering from Virginia Tech in Huntington, West Virginia.

**Shirley Holland**, Sierra Club and League of Women Voters Representative on a number Workgroups and Committees in Texas

Shirley, the citizens group panel member, is presently a member of the Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) and Resource Recovery Advisory Council of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC). This council advises TNRCC commissioners on MSW issues. She is chair of the Education Committee, and a member of the Border Affairs and Regulatory Oversight committees. She represents the Sierra Club/Dallas Group on the Dallas Area Household Hazardous Waste Network. She has served over the past 18 years as an active participant and has held positions of management in the League of Women Voters. She finished Grapevine Master Composters Course in November of 1993 and has completed 10 hours of instruction and 40 hours of community service and is a Master Composter. Space does not permit us to list her numerous accomplishments and positions of importance in the effort to improve the environment. She is, needless to say, well qualified to speak for the citizens.

## DAY TWO

**Customer Service Keynote: Candace M. Kane**, Director, Customer Service Initiative for Vice President Al Gore, National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR)

Candy joined Vice President Al Gore's National Performance Review in March 1995 to direct the

Customer Service Initiative. As part of this effort, to date, over 570 departments, agencies and organizations have developed over 5,000 customer service standards. She is director of the Blue Pages project to reinvent government phone listings in 6,200 phone books across the country that reach over 200 million Americans. Candy began her government career with the Department of the Navy over 26 years ago. She has been a member of the Senior Executive Service since 1992. She is a graduate of Leadership VA and the Federal Executive Institute. She has been active in Women's Executive Leadership mentoring and was selected as a Visiting Fellow with the Woodrow Wilson Public Service Program. She holds a degree from the University of Maryland.

**EPA's Customer Service Standards; Progress & Direction: John Jones, Inspector General's Office**  
(Bio information not available)

**Panelists:**

**Stan Siegel, Chairman, Customer Service in Permitting Workgroup (Region 2)**

Stan has been with EPA since 1973. He currently heads Region 2's Permits Integration Team, a new multimedia unit within the Division of Environmental Planning and Protection. Prior to this assignment, he was Branch Chief of Solid and Hazardous Waste programs for the Region. He was responsible for many facets of the RCRA program, including state authorization, municipal solid waste, and the underground storage tank program. He has had responsibilities in the water and waste permitting and enforcement programs. Prior to his employment with EPA, Stan worked for the US Army Corps of Engineers and the New York State Public Service Commission. He holds a BS in Chemical Engineering from the City College of New York and an MS in Environmental Engineering from Polytechnic Institute of New York.

**Chet McLaughlin, Pollution Prevention Expert, Partnerships Workgroup (Region 7)**

Chet is experienced in a number of areas: solid waste, pollution prevention, special waste, hazardous waste and underground storage tanks, grants, and is a quality management facilitator. He is a pollution prevention expert; Nebraska pollution prevention liaison and grants project officer; is responsible in Green Lights, Energy Star, and is the global climate change program manager. Chet is also responsible for the Missouri solid waste streamlining project, solid and hazardous waste flood grants, and is the Pollution Prevention Coordinating Committee Chair for EPA. Chet has long been an advocate of improved and increased customer service activities. He started the Region 7 Green Volunteers to help focus staff on outside education and community activities. He strongly believes in customer service as a responsibility of civil servants. He holds a BS in Civil Engineering and MS in Environmental Engineering from the University of Kansas.

**Tim Icke, Associate Chief, Watershed Branch, Assessment and Watershed Protection, Grants Workgroup (Office of Water)**

Tim is with the Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds (OWOW) and has served as the lead for the State, Tribal and Local Grants Core Process from the inception. Tim has an undergraduate degree in geology and a masters in urban planning. The Grants Core Process Workgroup has met on a number of occasions to develop draft and final standards, review and comment on the survey instrument and the responses, and to provide periodic updates on the status of customer service initiatives. Tim is an integral part of this process.

**Jim Downing, Team Leader, Labeling Team, Field And External Affairs Division, Pesticides Workgroup, Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP)**



Jim joined EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs in 1989 and has worked in the Registration Division since beginning his career with the Agency. He is now the Team Leader of the Labeling Team. As a member of the Labeling Team, Jim works on a number of special projects including the flammability of total release foggers, leading the State Labeling Issues Panel, maintaining the Label Review Manual, coordinating the label training program and working on various policy issues for the Labeling Team, as well as leading the team. Prior to coming to EPA, Jim was the Pesticide Registration Administrator from 1980 to 1989 for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. In that capacity, he administered the state pesticide registration program, including issuing FIFRA 24© Special Local Need Florida Experimental Use Permits. A graduate of the University of Florida, he holds a BS in Agriculture (1973) and a Master of Agriculture degree (1975).

**Peter D. Rosenberg**, Acting Director, Enforcement Capacity and Outreach Office, Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA), Enforcement Workgroup

Pete is the primary liaison with the EPA press office and the Department of Justice on enforcement and compliance communications. His office manages OECA's customer service efforts and also the Agency's Enhanced Public Access Project, which is developing a system for making all EPA policies, guidance and site-specific interpretations electronically available by the year 2,000. He joined EPA in 1981 as a member of the Hazardous Waste Enforcement Task Force and has been in EPA's enforcement program since 1984. Prior to joining EPA, he was the senior legislative assistant to Representative James J. Florio (D. New Jersey) from 1977-78, and a professional staff member of the US Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works.

**Sandy Hudnall**, Director, Executive Secretariat, Office of the Administrator, USEPA, Public Access Workgroup

Sandy is in her fifth year as Director of the Executive Secretariat. This office tracks approximately 125,000 pieces of correspondence each year and approximately 30,000 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. She came to EPA from the White House, where she was special assistant to the director of presidential correspondence. Previously, she was Director of Correspondence for the 1992 Clinton/ Gore Presidential Campaign and for the Arkansas Governor's Office. For 13 years, she taught high school English and French in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and taught evening courses in Garland County Community College. Sandy holds an MA in English. She resides in Virginia and is an avid sports fan. She enjoys hiking, tennis, reading, gardening, music and theater. She is a volunteer reading partner with the Everybody Wins (When Adults Read With Children) Program and with the Alexandria Shelter for the Homeless.

**Nan Parry**, National Center for Environmental Research and Quality Assurance, Research Grants Workgroup,

Nan has been a federal employee for 24 years. She started out as a GS-3 Clerk/Typist, but was, as Nan puts it, "so inept" that she returned to college. After earning a BA in Economics from the University of Maryland, she joined the Navy Department intern program. Most of her career, Nan has been involved in procurement at several federal agencies. Four years ago she became the contracts and quality assurance officer for her office within the Office of Research & Development. Nan also wears a third hat, Special Assistant to the Center's Deputy Director (in this role, she watches over the Research Grants Customer Service Core Process.)

**Guidelines for Customer Feedback and Measurement:** **Peter Durant**, Associate Director, Office of Resources Management & Administration, Office of Resource & Development

Peter joined EPA in 1987, having previously served in the Office of Management and Budget,

Civil Service Commission, and the General Services Administration. He holds two degrees from Harvard University (BA in 1971; MPA in 1982.)

**Panelists:**

**Pat Bonner**, Director, Customer Service in EPA, Office of Policy (OP)

Pat left the Office of Water (OW) to join OPPE in August 1996 to lead the Agency wide Customer Service Program. In OW, Pat worked with all ten regions to develop measures and the first management agreements, led an environmental education team, and coordinated partnership activities within and outside the Agency. Pat has worked in the private sector (as a technical writer, advertising executive and college instructor), in county and international government, and in her own business. She was the Director of Information Services for the International Joint Commission's Great Lakes Office in Canada before spending six years as the Program Management and Communications Director of the Chesapeake Bay Program, and two years as External Affairs Director for Region 10. Pat designs jewelry, enjoys jazz music and old movies, and has traveled to 80 countries and 50 states. She holds a BA from Carnegie-Mellon University, and an MS from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

**Michael Binder**, Special Assistant to the Assistant Inspector General for Audit, Office of the Inspector General (OIG), USEPA

Michael began his federal career in 1973 as an auditor with the General Accounting Office, has worked with the Department of Commerce as a strategic planning and evaluation specialist, and the HUD OIG before joining the EPA OIG in 1983. He has a BA and MA in Business Administration from the George Washington University and has attended Harvard University, the Federal Law Enforcement Center and the Federal Executive Institute. Michael is a Certified Internal Auditor, Certified Fraud Examiner, and a former national officer in the Association of Government Accountants. He created The Montgomery Summer Tennis Camps, published several articles and course books, and is a professional orchestra leader. Michael was a part-time Associate Professor of management and finance for 17 years and is currently on the faculty of the Government Auditors Training Institute and other institutions. In the EPA OIG, Michael has served as the Director of Resources Management and Senior Budget Officer.

**Elizabeth Harris**, Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER)

Elizabeth joined the Agency in June 1997 under the Quality Scholars Program after graduating from Duke University with a BA in Public Policy and History. She is OSWER's Audit Liaison, international visitors coordinator, and the Customer Service Roll-out Coordinator. Prior to coming to the EPA, Elizabeth served as an intern at the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

**Luncheon Speaker: Priscilla Evans**, Motivational Speaker, Corporate Training and Development for The Zig Ziglar Corporation

Priscilla is a marvelous singer, highly motivational speaker, excellent facilitator of leadership training and development seminars, and a sought after conference speaker on moral issues for youth. She has varied experience in the broadcast industry, both in television and radio and is experienced in the entertainment industry as well.

**Customer Service Training: Marylouise Uhlig**, Director, Office of Program Management Operations, Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances (OPPTS)

Ms. Uhlig joined EPA in 1974 and has held a number of increasingly senior positions. Currently,

Ms. Uhlig serves as the Director of the Office of Program Management Operations in (OPPTS). In this capacity she (1) serves as the principal advisor to the AA on development of policies and guidance on administration, human resources and program management; (2) oversees program accountability and analysis; (3) facilitates regional/state/tribal/public communications and outreach; and (4) represents OPPTS on multi-disciplinary task forces and committees. She also serves as a point of contact with Congress. From March through September of 1997, Ms. Uhlig served as Acting Associate Administrator for Regional Operations, State/Local Relations (OROSLR). After completing this temporary assignment, she returned to her permanent position as director to OPMO. Ms. Uhlig holds a B.S. from the Pennsylvania State University in communications and a M.A. in public administration from Central Michigan, and is a graduate of the Senior Managers in Government Program at Harvard University.

**Panelists:**

**Nola Cooke**, Director, Office of Communications and Public Involvement, Region 8,

Nola has been responsible for the communication and public involvement focus of EPA's Region 8 office in Denver, Colorado for the past 10 years. The Region's continued commitment to giving timely, accurate information to its customers is reflected by her staff as they provide services including: environmental education, freedom of information responses, technical library support, public involvement, Congressional liaison, print and broadcast media liaison, toll-free telephone access, speaker bureau staffing and customer service. Customer Service is the foundation on which the staff carries out their job. They are contacted hundreds of times a week by internal and external customers....demanding, satisfied, questioning customers....all of whom receive the very best of service. Nola is a strong believer in "what goes around comes around", so it's logical that she expects top-notch customer service from her staff. Prior to joining EPA, Nola worked for the Internal Revenue Service in Atlanta, Georgia, the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, DC, the US Army in Augsburg, Germany, and the Caddo Parish School District in Shreveport, Louisiana. All of her professional experience has involved communication and problem solving, whether in the classroom or dealing with veterans preparing to re-enter civilian life. She states that Customer Service is an integral part of her office's culture, and she is constantly looking for ways to improve how and what the Agency provides.

**Rene Henry**, Director, Office of Communications & Governments Relations, Region 3,

USEPA

Rene has had diverse careers in public relations, sports marketing, housing and real estate, television and entertainment, politics, higher education and as a trade association executive. In the mid 70s, he co-founded in Los Angeles what became the second largest international public relations firm in the West with offices in New York, Washington, and Paris; and affiliates in London, Rome, Tokyo and Mexico City. He served on President Bush's executive cabinet, and was Executive Director of University Relations at Texas A&M in College Station. He has produced and directed award-winning videos and television documentaries, and authored books on land investment, utility cogeneration, sports, marketing public relations and crisis communications. He holds his AB degree in economics from the College of William and Mary and did graduate study in marketing at West Virginia University.

**Mike O'Reilly**, Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxics (OPPT)

(Bio information not available)

## **DAY THREE**

### **Workshops**

#### **Designing Customer Surveys**

**George Walker**, Deputy Director, EPA's Customer Service Program - Office of Policy

George has been Deputy Director since February 1997, supporting the effort to improve EPA's responsiveness to its various customers. He is certified in Zenger-Miller training and facilitation methods. He served as primary contact and directed outreach for public participation in the grants program for the Environmental Education Division. He negotiated, monitored and evaluated work plan activities for cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay and directed \$10,000,000 annually in grants. Before joining EPA, George worked in Montana for the Bureau of Reclamation coordinating NEPA related reviews and decisions. He was the "environmental watchdog" at a nuclear power plant construction site with TVA. Until 3 Mile Island caused a cut back in the expansion program. George also taught earth science and biology in Connecticut after returning from Viet Nam. He holds an MS in Science Education from Western Connecticut State Teachers College and a Geography degree from Middlebury College.

**Wayne Naylor**, Chief, Technical and Program Support Branch, Region 3

Wayne began his career with EPA in 1979 in the Hazardous Waste Management Program. He is in the Waste and Chemical Management Division. He served as Regional Quality Coordinator and chaired the National EPA Customer Service Design Team which prepared EPA's first report to the President in response to the Executive Order on Customer Service. Currently a member of Region 3's Customer Service Workgroup, Wayne participates in implementing the Region's Customer Service efforts.

#### **Forging the Links Workshop**

**Pat Bonner**, Director, EPA's Customer Service Program, Office of Policy (See earlier profile.)

## **The Plano Memo**

### **Background**

During the final session of the conference, Derry Allen volunteered to draft a memo for all of those attending to use to share the highlights of the program with colleagues throughout the Agency. After circulating it for comment and incorporating suggestions, on May 11, 1998, Derry Allen forwarded the memo with the following e-mailed note to all EPA participants:

### **Transmittal**

I am pleased to send you the finished copy of the "Plano Memo," summarizing the most important points that we discussed in Plano, Texas, at the first EPA National Customer Service Conference. This memo reflects comments we received on the earlier draft which we circulated.

As the heading of the memo announces, this memo is from us, the EPA participants at the conference, to our EPA colleagues. The next step is up to you. Please share this memo with your colleagues - up, down and sideways on the organization chart. Use this memo as a way to begin discussions about the particular customer service initiatives you are working on for your office. If all of us do this together, the message will be heard.

Once you have shared this memo, please let me (Derry Allen), Pat Bonner or George Walker know how your colleagues have responded and what initiatives you are starting. We will share the best of this information with the rest of the EPA customer service network.

Thank you for your continued efforts on behalf of improved customer service at EPA. A special thank you to those who have filled out the conference evaluation form. If there is any way that I, Pat or George can help you, please let us know.

### **The Plano Memo**

**SUBJECT:** Customer Service at EPA - The "Plano Memo"

**FROM:** Participants at EPA's First National Customer Service Conference

**TO:** Our EPA Colleagues

On April 14 - 16, 1998, over 150 of us from every EPA program office and nine of the ten regional offices met in Plano, Texas, for EPA's first National Customer Service Conference. We were joined by over 50 people from other federal and state agencies and the private sector as we talked about ways to improve the service that EPA delivers to its customers.

By all accounts, the conference was very successful. We learned a great deal from each other about specific ways to improve our customer service. We are sending this memo

(the "Plano Memo") to you, our EPA colleagues, to share ten of the most important points that emerged from the conference. The draft of this memo was circulated among us and this version reflects comments submitted. We are also preparing a more detailed report from the conference.

First we owe you some definitions. We use the word "customer" to mean all the people with whom we must work and on whom we depend and who depend on us to protect the environment - the general public, members of the regulated community, interest groups, our partners in state, local and tribal governments, grantees, etc. Each of us also has customers who are internal to EPA. We use the word "service" to mean not only what we do with customers - answering letters and telephones, dispensing information, issuing permits, making grants and so forth - but also how we do it with them - the quality and timeliness of our interaction and our attention to their needs (to the extent that their needs are consistent with our mission to protect the environment). Different EPA offices provide different customers with different services, but the ten points below about customer service that emerged from our conference apply uniformly to the entire agency.

### Ten Points from the Conference

1. *Good customer service is critical to our mission and can not be ignored by anyone at EPA.*

It is not the flavor of the month. We say this because, beyond the Executive Order and memos from the President and the Vice President and the Administrator and the Deputy Administrator on this subject, the American people are demanding better customer service and we depend on their support and assistance to protect the environment. As several speakers pointed out at our conference, people frequently place as much or more importance on how a service is provided as they do on the substance of the service itself.

2. *EPA is doing a lot to improve customer service, but we have a long way to go.*

To begin, we are inventing our own model of customer service, tailored to our uniqueness. We now have measurable goals, specific areas of emphasis, Customer Service Standards and an agency wide Customer Service Steering Committee, but this is not enough to do the job. Customer service must be an attitude, a group norm, an integral part of our culture, and cultural change does not come quickly or easily. Because EPA is a big organization, our strategy is to encourage individual programs and regions to develop and implement customer service initiatives. At our conference we discussed many examples of what we are doing in one office that would be good in other offices. We also have many good examples to follow in other agencies and the private sector.

3. *Better customer service must be energized from the top down and from the bottom up.*

We are pleased that some top agency officials have issued memos and plans on the subject, and we would like to see more of this. AA's and RA's will also need to invest very modest amounts of money and FTE. Staff should be encouraged, supported and rewarded for improving customer service. When this happens, staff have shown that they will invent many new approaches on their own. As our host, Acting Regional Administrator Jerry Clifford,

explained to us, customer service is best provided by people who feel empowered and understand that "If it's going to be, it's up to me."

4. *The first step to better customer service is to listen to the customers and focus on what they are seeking.*

Often we think we know what the customers want but when we ask them we are surprised to learn that they actually want something else. The customers who spoke to us made listening their #1 point of advice. We discussed a number of ways that we can listen better.

5. *The only way we will know if we are providing better customer service is if we measure our progress.*

We are pleased to have a cross-office group that is drafting customer feedback guidelines for the agency.

6. *Customer service training is necessary and available.*

We have a 2-1/2 hour introductory workshop that EPA staff have developed for their colleagues and six additional modules that are tailored to specific situations. With the help of the EPA Learning Institute, EPA staff have been trained to give these workshops and have already begun doing so. Our goal is to have 4000 staff participate in the introductory workshop by the end of FY 1998, and we are on our way.

7. *Customer service begins at home.*

We noted that every one of us has EPA customers. If nothing else, good internal customer service makes our own work more pleasant. More importantly, how we serve each other sets the tone for how we treat others outside the agency. Additionally, good internal customer service obviously facilitates the external services we provide.

8. *We need to expand our efforts with our state and other partners to deliver quality customer service together.*

The state participants at our conference want to continue working with us and want to bring in their colleagues. We were also reminded that EPA customer service to the states is the first step to partnership. The same applies to tribes, communities and others.

9. *Being prompt and polite is important but it is not enough.*

We still need to do the right thing for the environment. We discussed several examples of what this means.

10. *The time is right to move ahead on customer service.*

Our conference demonstrated that we now have a critical mass of staff who understand what customer service is all about and are committed to act creatively. We have many other basics

in place - goals, standards, committees, training, etc. The President's March 3, 1998, memo on "Conducting 'Conversations with America' to Further Improve Customer Service" bids us to expand our efforts to listen to our customers. A modest amount of effort across the agency can make us a recognized leader.

For further information on this conference or the EPA Customer Service Program, please contact Patricia Bonner, Director of Customer Service (202-260-0599), or George Walker, Deputy Director of Customer Service (202-260-9144), both in OPPE.

One final note. Our local host committee, the Region 6 Customer Service Team, did a magnificent job managing the logistics of this conference. For their outstanding demonstration of how "customer service begins at home," we gave them a special customer service award.



**List of Participants**  
National Customer Service Conference  
April 14-16, 1998

1. Acevedo, Janie (Region 6)
2. Allen, Derry (Office of Policy/HQ)
3. Allen, Miles (Office of Reinvention/HQ)
4. Allison, Becky
5. Baca, Joseph (Food & Drug Administration - Dallas)
6. Baca, Jim (Office of Administration and Resources Management/HQ)
7. Baker, Paulette (Region 6)
8. Barron, Elaine (Physicians for Social Responsibility)
9. Barrett, Craig (Small Business Administration)
10. Barrows, Frederick (Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality)
11. Bauman, Michael (Region 6)
12. Bellina, Andy (Region 2)
13. Bennett, Joann (Region 6)
14. Binder, Michael (Office of the Inspector General/HQ)
15. Bivens, Janice (Region 6)
16. Black, Brenda (Region 6)
17. Blackbear, Darrell (Region 6)
18. Bohlen, Carolyn (Region 5)
19. Bohn, Brent (Office of Research & Development/HQ)
20. Bolden, Carl (Region 6)
21. Bond, Karen (Region 6)
22. Bond, Robert (Region 6)
23. Bonner, Pat (Customer Service Program/HQ)
24. Bowen, Russell (Region 6)
25. Braunston, Judy (Region 3)
26. Brown, Rosalind (Region 4)
27. Bruce, Shirley (Region 6)
28. Burgan, Karen (Office of Solid Waste & Emergency Response/HQ)
29. Butler, Gladean (Region 6)
30. Byars, Sharonita (Region 4)
31. Callahan, Dick (Office of Administration and Resources Management/HQ)
32. Cardenas, Adele (Region 6)
33. Cardesso, Karle D.
34. Carroll, Lynda (Region 6)
35. Case, Heather (Office of Policy/HQ)
36. Chambers, Carlene (Region 6)
37. Chang, Tai-Ming (Region 6)
38. Charter, Rick (Fina Corporation)
39. Clifford, Jerry (Region 6)
40. Coats, Janetta (Region 6)
41. Conde, Dyanne (Region 6)
42. Contreras, Robert (Region 6)
43. Cottrill, Charlotte (Office of Research & Development/HQ)
44. Cooke, Nola (Region 8)
45. Coolidge, Dell E. (Small Business Administration - Dallas)
46. Coutlakis, Anna (Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances/HQ)
47. Craig, Sylvia (Department of Labor - Dallas)
48. Crawford, Carol (Office of Administration and Resources Management/HQ)
49. Crosby, Elaine (Food & Drug Administration - Dallas)
50. Crossland, Ronnie (Region 6)

51. Cullinane, Kevin (U.S. Mint/DC)
52. Daniels, Evelyn (Region 6)
53. DeLa Cruz, Raquel (Immigration and Naturalization Service - Dallas)
54. Diaz, Deanna (Region 4)
55. Demariniss, Tony (Office of Administration & Resources Management/HQ)
56. Depukat, Kathleen (Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances/HQ)
57. Doucette, Judith (Office of the Chief Financial Officer/HQ)
58. Dowell, Johnie (Region 6)
59. Downing, Jim (Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances/HQ)
60. Duncan, Judy (Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality)
61. Durant, Peter (Office of Research & Development/HQ)
62. Edlund, Carl (Region 6)
63. Eklund, Patricia (Region 9)
64. Ethridge, Harold (Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality)
65. Evans, Priscilla (Zig Ziglar Corporation - Dallas)
66. Fanning, Cynthia (Region 6)
67. Faultry, Charles (Region 6)
68. Flores-Gregg, Paula (Region 6)
69. Foster, Peggy (Region 6)
70. Ferguson, Jack (Region 6)
71. Fontenot, Gerald (Region 6)
72. Fontenot, Jane (Region 6)
73. Fox, Chuck (Office of Reinvention/HQ)
74. Fox, Mary (Region 4)
75. Franke, Jenaie (Region 6)
76. Freefield, Ro (Region 6)
77. Fredericks, Jan (Region 6)
78. Fritz, Edward (Texas Committee on Natural Resources - Dallas)
79. Shelley Fudge (Office of Policy/HQ)
80. Garland, Janice (Region 6)
81. Gazda, Charles (Region 6)
82. Gersh, Annette (Region 6)
83. Gibbs, Marsha (Region 6)
84. Gilson, James (Arkansas Department of Pollution Control & Ecology)
85. Goldfarb, Barry (Office of Research & Development/HQ)
86. Gooden, Melanie (Office of the Chief Financial Officer/HQ)
87. Gray, David (Region 6)
88. Greenfield, Barbara (Region 6)
89. Grey, Frank (Department of the Navy -Fort Worth)
90. Griggs, Marsha (Region 6)
91. Guermendi, Kerri (Region 6)
92. Hacker, Meg (National Archives Record Center - Ft. Worth)
93. Hanneschlager, Robert (Region 6)
94. Hardwood, Billie (Region 6)
95. Hardy, Carolyn (Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance)
96. Harris, Elizabeth (Office of Solid Waste & Emergency Response)
97. Hart, Jeff (Region 8)
98. Hathaway, Bill (Region 6)
99. Haynes, Rexene (Region 6)
100. Head, Terrie (Region 6)
101. Hedling, William (Office of Administration & Resources Management/HQ)
102. Hendrick, Earl (Region 6)
103. Henry, Rene (Region 3)
104. Hensley, Charles (Region 7)
105. Hobson, Judy (Office of Research & Development/National Environmental Research)

- Laboratory/Durham, NC)
106. Hochstetler, Dan (Region 6)
  107. Honker, Bill (Region 6)
  108. Holland, Shirley - Sierra Club
  109. Holtsclaw, Jeannie (Office of Administration & Resources Management/HQ)
  110. Howard, Barry (Office of Research & Development/Research Triangle Park, North Carolina)
  111. Hudnall, Sandra (Administrator's Office/HQ)
  112. Hullum, Teena (Region 6)
  113. Icke, Tim (Office of Water/HQ)
  114. James, Steve (Office of Research & Development/Cincinnati)
  115. Jensen, Julie (Region 6)
  116. Johnson, Stephanie (Region 6)
  117. Jones, Gwendolyn (Office of the General Counsel/HQ)
  118. Kane, Candace (National Partnership for Reinventing Government)
  119. Kern, Cathy (US Patent & Trademark Office)
  120. Kim, Youngmoo (Region 6)
  121. Knudson, Myron (Region 6)
  122. Kryszcun, Kenneth (Region 3)
  123. Lane, Patricia (Region 6)
  124. Langley, Shirley (Region 6)
  125. Lester, Miriam (Region 4)
  126. Levitt, Shelly (Region 6)
  127. Libertz, Amelia (Region 3)
  128. Lipscomb, Edwin (Small Business Administration - Dallas)
  129. Paula Longly (Region 6)
  130. McCallister, Belinda (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - Dallas)
  131. McDonald, Diana (Region 6)
  132. McDonald, James (Office of the Administrator/HQ)
  133. McGee, Amy (Region 6)
  134. McIlwain, Albert (Department of Agriculture - Dallas)
  135. McLaughlin, Chet (Region 7)
  136. McMaster, James (Office of Research & Development)
  137. MacGuire, Valerie (Region 4)
  138. Maddox, Sherry (Region 4)
  139. Makris, Jim (Office of Solid Waste & Emergency Response/HQ)
  140. Malaby, Maynard (Social Security Administration/HQ)
  141. Malone, Kathleen (Region 2)
  142. Marshall, Scott (Small Business Administration - Dallas)
  143. Marteer, Thomas (Region 5)
  144. Massey, Zee (Department of Labor - Dallas)
  145. Means, Beth (Office of Administration & Resources Management/HQ)
  146. Miller, Michael (Region 6)
  147. Murphy, Bob (Region 6)
  148. Morin, Jeff (Office of Reinvention/HQ)
  149. Nawyn, Richard (Region 4)
  150. Naylor, Wayne (Region 3)
  151. Nunn, Andrew (Department of Labor - Dallas)
  152. Oakley, Jerry (Office of Administration & Resources Management/HQ)
  153. Oldham, Margaret (Region 6)
  154. Ondarza, Arnold (Region 6)
  155. O'Reilly, Mike (Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances/HQ)
  156. Parr, Buddy (Region 6)
  157. Parry, Nan (Office of Research & Development/HQ)
  158. Peyke, Mark (Region 6)
  159. Pflum, Neil (Region 6)

- 160. Pfundheller, Janet (Region 5)
- 161. Phillips, Adrienne (Region 5)
- 162. Phillips, Pamela (Region 6)
- 163. Pierce, Jennifer (US District Clerk - Dallas)
- 164. Pugh-Fester, Aurelia (Office of Policy/HQ)
- 165. Ramirez, Kathy (Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission)
- 166. Reich, Tom (Region 6)
- 167. Reid, Darren (Office of Policy/HQ)
- 168. Robinson, Kathleen (Region 6)
- 169. Roarke, Carlton (US Postal Service/DC)
- 170. Rosenberg, Peter (Office of Enforcement & Compliance Assurance/HQ)
- 171. Rothstein, Caren (Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances/HQ)
- 172. Santamaria, Rafael (Region 4)
- 173. Saralegrin, Amanda (Department of Labor - Dallas)
- 174. Schaul, Peter (Region 3)
- 175. Scott, Michael (Office of Communications, Education & Media Relations/HQ)
- 176. Sewell, Sylvia (Region 4)
- 177. Senna, Patty (Region 6)
- 178. Siegel, Stanley (Region 2)
- 179. Singhivi, Sunita (Region 6)
- 180. Smith, Brenda (Small Business Administration - Ft. Worth)
- 181. Smith, John (NARC - Ft. Worth)
- 182. Smith, Rhonda (Region 6)
- 183. Smith, Steven (Office of Research & Development)
- 184. Speizman, Elissa (Region 5)
- 185. Stenger, Wren (Region 6)
- 186. Stone, Robert (National Partnership for Reinventing Government/DC)
- 187. Street, Price (Region 6)
- 188. Stuker, Larry (Federal Communications Commission/Gettysburg, PA)
- 189. Suber, Angela (Office of Policy/HQ)
- 190. Sykes, Tremella
- 191. Talton, Ken (Region 6)
- 192. Thompson, Mark (Immigration & Naturalization Service - Dallas)
- 193. Tippeconnic, Charles (Fort Sill Apache Tribe)
- 194. Toy, Nancy (Office of Enforcement & Compliance Assurance/HQ)
- 195. Uhlig, Marylouise (Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances/HQ)
- 196. Volasgis, Gregory (Office of Administration & Resources Management/HQ)
- 197. Walker, George (Customer Service Program/HQ)
- 198. Walters, Donn (Region 6)
- 199. Wessels, Dana (Region 6)
- 200. Williams, Don (Region 6)
- 201. Williamson, Betty (Region 6)
- 202. Willis, Barbara (Office of Policy/HQ)
- 203. Wilson, Janet (Office of the Inspector General/HQ)
- 204. Wilson, Lillie (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - Dallas)
- 205. Wilson, Ronnie (Region 4)
- 206. Winter, Betty (Region 4)
- 207. Wright, Ken (Office of Administration & Resources Management/HQ)
- 208. Yetts, Sylvia (Food & Drug Administration - Dallas)
- 209. Youngmoo, Kim (Region 6)
- 210. Zarow, Linda (Office of Air & Radiation/HQ)