



State of Missouri

2013 Governor's Award for Quality and Productivity

Executive Summary

Project or team name: MoDOT Statewide Customer Service Team

Nominator: Greg Clarkston

Nominating Department: (Nominations must include names of all agencies/departments/organizations/businesses, etc.)

Missouri Department of Transportation

Category: Customer Service

Executive Summary: (Executive Summary page must be 500 words or less, 12 points, Times New Roman font, and left justified. **Attach the Executive Summary to the front of the nomination.**)

Facing challenges brought about by MoDOT's Bolder Five Year Direction, the customer service team had to drastically change the way it had operated for nearly 16 years. The BFYD required staffing reductions along with organizational restructuring from ten to seven district locations. An additional challenge was to maintain the high levels of customer satisfaction that MoDOT had been achieving for a number of years. To meet the challenge, a team of customer service staff from each district and the Central Office was created to address statewide center staffing, routine call routing, emergency operations and after-hour calls.

The team worked to put in place a new call routing process. The previous process had calls routing to the district located in the area code of the call's origination. This process allowed callers to speak to a representative who may be quite familiar with the local or regional area. However, this also contributed to callers often waiting in queue for a period of time or being dropped when queue volumes reached a maximum level. Call centers were also only staffed during regular working hours. Out of state calls were directed to one single location. Information sources and computer applications were built and maintained to accommodate the district's needs rather than having statewide application. Each of the customer service centers operated somewhat independently of the other and statewide coordination was minimal.

The team's work required a review of the original process and to look for opportunities to not only improve it, but to revamp it to make it work better on a statewide level. Once in place, the system would require employees in any regional office to be able to assist a caller from any location in Missouri or out of state. All of this was to be accomplished with a reduced number of staff and an expectation that more calls could be answered in a faster time along with maintaining the same or higher levels of customer satisfaction. The team developed a new routing process that allowed callers to connect to a local office, but to be routed to another region if waiting time reached the set maximum time. By making this change, callers would not have to wait as long to get a response. This would be especially helpful during emergency events. The team also recommended changes in each call center's operational hours; even expanding the St. Louis office to a 24/7 setup.

With these changes put in place, the citizens of Missouri along with visitors traveling through our state, can receive answers to their inquiries faster and from highly knowledgeable staff. The new process has enabled MoDOT to answer nearly 99 percent of the calls it receives. Citizens can know when they place a call to MoDOT, they will speak to a live person.

MoDOT staff has stepped up and advanced their knowledge and skills. New resources and computer applications are in place to support them as they deliver outstanding customer service politely, clearly and quickly.



State of Missouri – 2013 Governor’s Award for Quality and Productivity

NOMINATION FORM

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Department: Missouri Department of Transportation

1. Project or team name: MoDOT Statewide Customer Service Team

2. List the name of all team members, job titles, state agency department, and/or community

organization: *(Please list alphabetically by last name – 2 to 20 team members maximum.)*

Benefield, Jennifer; Customer Relations Manager-Kansas City District; MoDOT
Black, Melissa; Customer Relations Manager-Northwest District; MoDOT
Campbell, Mara; Customer Relations Director-Central Office; MoDOT
Dickson, Jim; Organizational Performance Specialist; MoDOT
Edwards, Robert; Customer Relations Manager-Southwest District, MoDOT
Elliott, Yvonne (Marie); Customer Relations Manager-St. Louis District; MoDOT
Ellison, Marisa; Customer Relations Manager-Northeast District; MoDOT
Oxenhandler, Sally; Customer Relations Manager-Central District; MoDOT
Thieret, Nicole; Customer Relations Manager-Southeast District; MoDOT

3. Nomination Category: *(Check only one.)*

INNOVATION

CUSTOMER SERVICE

EFFICIENCY / PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

4. Describe why you selected this nomination category:

This team's efforts were focused on maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction with a significantly smaller staff. The focus of the plan would address statewide center staffing, routine call handling and routing, emergency operations and after-hour calls.

II. BACKGROUND

1. When did the team begin its work?

August 2011

2. What date did the team initiate the implementation phase of the project?

May 2012

3. Is the project:

Time Limited

Completed

Ongoing

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Why was the project needed?

The Missouri Department of Transportation had operated 10 regional customer service centers for 16 years. These centers handled local calls, walk-ins and regional calls from a statewide toll-free number. Each center operated for the most part independently of the others. However, a department-wide resizing effort was poised to eliminate three regional centers and reduce staffing statewide by 43 percent. A team of customer service center managers were challenged to provide a transition plan that would allow the department to maintain its high levels of customer satisfaction with a significantly smaller staff.

Coupled with this transition plan was a need to reduce customer wait time in queue and even workloads among centers. This required revamping the call routing process. The original process sent calls to the closest regional

center based on the caller's area code. Peak calling periods could result in callers being on hold for long periods of time. Also, once the regional calling queue reached its maximum number of callers, subsequent calls received a recorded message to call back later. The new call routing process needed to reduce call waiting times.

While callers appreciate a local representative, waiting in queue or getting the recorded message delivers no assistance. In addition, heavy call volumes in one area of the state would have the customer service representatives stretched to the maximum, while other areas had few calls. The staffing and scheduling process needed the most efficient use of a smaller customer service staff in order to shorten caller wait times and eliminate being sent to a recorded message.

2. What were the primary goals of the project? (150 words or less.)

The primary goals of the project were:

- 1) Maintain outstanding customer service statewide.
- 2) Consolidate the 10 customer service centers to seven that ensured the same level of quality service received by customers through this avenue.
- 3) Ensure customers receive timely, accurate and understandable responses.
- 4) Ensure all contacts and inquiries received were directed to the appropriate location for prompt response.
- 5) Improve the ability of our customer service centers to handle customer contacts during times of emergency.
- 6) Address staffing needs, including after-hour phone coverage and the quantity and location of employees, in addition to how out-of-state telephone calls are handled.

3. Describe the project: (200 words or less.)

The project involved flowcharting the original process to identify new ways to handle calls more efficiently. The team evaluated the flowchart for potential delays in handling incoming calls and researched maximum caller queue times for professional calling centers to develop a new routing process to test and implement. The team also reviewed calling volumes for customer service centers prior to consolidation and projected call volumes for each of the seven regions. The team provided staffing and scheduling guidance to regional managers based on the calling data and the new call routing process. The team also looked at hourly calling patterns for core hours and overnight and weekends to identify when staff needed to be scheduled.

Supporting the new process to help ensure its success required the team to also look at information resources the district representatives used to assist users. This would aid representatives in other regions of the state in addressing local and regional inquiries. The customer service database used to log call reports was also examined by the team. The team provided direction on changes that needed to be made in adapting these regional resources, to have more statewide applicability.

4. Explain how the accomplishment of the team exceeds their regular duties and responsibilities. (150 words or less.)

As with the rest of the organization facing right-sizing due to the Bolder Five-Year Direction, customer service centers needed to be reduced. The challenge was to develop a plan that enabled the centers to handle a larger volume of calls while maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction and with reduced staff. To accomplish this, team members had to think and act strategically at the statewide level rather than focusing on regional needs.

5. Which of the following describes the intended benefits of the project? (Check all that apply and provide an explanation.)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost Reduction | <input type="checkbox"/> Time Savings | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased Effectiveness |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improved Process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: Describe | |

The new call routing process has enabled a reduced MoDOT staff to handle a higher volume of calls due to fewer calls being abandoned or directed to a recorded message. Customer satisfaction levels have been maintained, or exceeded, the previous levels under the old process.

IV. RESULTS / MEASUREMENT

1. Describe how the success of the project was measured and what outcomes were achieved. (Description should not exceed 300-500 words.)

MoDOT achieved all of the goals set forth by the team. The new call routing process allows a regional center to answer local calls until its overflow queue reaches six callers. Once the queue is full, the call is routed to the next available customer service representative in another regional center. Calls in queue are also routed after they are in queue for three minutes. The calling volumes and patterns showed the reduced staffing could handle the call volumes if more calls were shared statewide rather than staying in the regional centers. Hourly calling patterns helped establish core center schedules for rural centers with extended hours in the state's two urban districts. The hourly data also showed the staffing levels needed to convert the St. Louis center into a 24-hour operation.

MoDOT is able to measure the success of the new call routing process through data produced from its call management system. Call Volume--With this new process in place, more calls are being handled. For the period from January 1, 2013 through April 30, 2013, MoDOT's customer call centers handled over 88,000 calls, (a 24 percent increase). This compares to nearly 71,000 calls handled during the same months in 2011, when there were more staff in place to handle the calls. Time Spent in Queue--The average time a caller spends in queue has also been reduced. In the January through April 2011 period, the average spent in queue was 2:24; in the same period in 2013, the average was 1:45 (a 27 percent reduction). Abandoned Calls--Calls abandoned in queue have also decreased by 23 percent.

The improved call routing process enabled MoDOT to respond to customer inquiries during emergency situations. Over 18,000 calls (20.6 percent) of the 88,000 received by MoDOT call centers in the January through April 2013 period were during three days when Missouri experienced winter storm events. Over 54 percent of those calls during those storm events were routed to regional centers to assist the impacted regions in answering customer inquiries. With a lower number of calls abandoned in the queue, MoDOT was able to handle 98.8 percent of all calls that came to our centers during those events.

With the higher volumes in calls, reduced number of staff, and reduced time spent in queue, MoDOT has maintained, and even increased its customer satisfaction measures as reported in MoDOT Tracker. Based on monthly surveys of 200 customers who contact MoDOT, overall customer satisfaction with the response went from 84 percent in the first quarter of 2011 to 86 percent in the same quarter in 2013. For those same periods, satisfaction with the politeness of the response went from 95 percent to 99 percent; clarity of the response increased from 87 to 92 percent; and responsiveness increased from 85 to 93 percent.

2. Are the benefits derived from this project: (Check only one.)

Recurring

One-time

3. If recurring, how will the benefits be sustained? (Explain in 150 words or less.)

MoDOT will continue to improve the call routing process. Staffing needs are continually being reviewed to ensure that we have the right staff in the right place. Regional call center's core hours are also modified to accommodate call volumes. Successful implementation has allowed queue time to be reduced to less than two minutes. In addition, enhancements are being made to information resources and the call report database to make them more accessible and easier to work with for statewide users. Training also is provided to employees. The customer satisfaction measures in MoDOT's performance management system will also continue to be used to monitor the call center performance in addressing customer inquiries.

V. RECOGNITION / AWARDS

1. Has this project previously been nominated for the Governor's Award for Quality and Productivity?
If yes, when?

No

2. If yes, for which category was it nominated?

3. Has this project received any other awards or recognition in the past? If yes, describe.

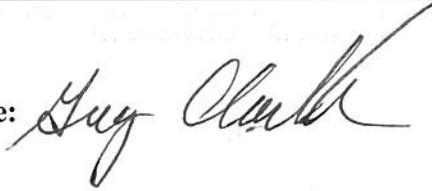
No

VI. NOMINATOR'S INFORMATION

Nominating Department: Customer Relations

Name: Greg Clarkston

Signature:



Telephone Number: 573-526-3087

E-Mail Address: greg.clarkston@modot.mo.gov

VII. DEPARTMENT COORDINATOR'S INFORMATION

Name: Kelly Backues

Signature:



Telephone Number: 573-751-5985

E-Mail Address: kelly.backues@modot.mo.gov

VIII. DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR APPROVAL

Department Director's Name:

David B. Nichols, P.E.

Signature:



Telephone Number: 573-751-4586

E-Mail Address: david.nichols@modot.mo.gov

Nomination must be signed ONLY by the Department Director to be eligible for consideration. Nominations not signed by the Department Director will be returned to the agency coordinator.