

Court Services Customer Service Wait Times

Public Safety and Homeland Security
Committee

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Objective

- To observe Court Services customer service delivery in order to provide recommendations to:
 - Reduce the amount of time a customer waits for service
 - Improve the quality of service provided
 - Enhance the overall customer experience

Approach

- Conducted scheduled and unscheduled site visits to observe workflow
- Consulted stakeholders for feedback on services provided by Courts
- Researched customer service delivery models deployed in other court and non-court entities
- Prioritized recommendations and developed Action Plans
- Conducted follow-up site visits to assess impacts of implemented recommendations

Customer Service Recommendations Overview

- Based on initial observations and analysis (see detailed list in “Appendix A”), over 30 recommendations made to:
 - Increase and/or expand service time delivery hours
 - Remove customers from the line by providing alternative options for customer service
 - Process customers more efficiently
 - Improve the perception of customer service by increasing the customer’s comfort level and providing other activities to engage the customer while waiting
- Recommendations are in various stages of implementation and have been planned on 30, 60, 90, and 180 days and beyond implementation schedules (see detailed list in “Appendix B”)
- Several recommendations have been implemented and the results are being seen

Impact of Implemented Recommendations

As a result of improvements made so far, customers have experienced:

- Shorter wait times in line to speak with a customer service representative
 - During initial observation period (Aug/Sep '05), wait time ranged from 19 to 48 minutes
 - During a recent observation (Nov/Dec '05), wait time ranged from 0 to 30 minutes

Impact of Implemented Recommendations

- More convenient hours of operation
 - Customer service windows open at 7:30 a.m. instead of 8:00 a.m.
 - More windows are open during lunch hours and other peak times
- More readily available information
 - Information booth in lobby is staffed at 7:00 a.m. when the building opens
 - An additional information booth at the main entrance on Harwood is also staffed
 - Service lines are monitored regularly by staff

Impact of Implemented Recommendations

- Opportunity to submit feedback
 - Suggestion box placed in lobby area
 - Public feedback telephone number posted at each service window
- Friendlier customer service
 - Observed staff smiling and greeting customers more often

Next Steps

- Monitor customer wait times monthly to account for any seasonal variances
- Begin customer feedback programs April 2006 to gauge customer perception of service
- Continue to make adjustments to service delivery techniques as required
- Provide internet and telephone payment options Summer 2006
- Continue with implementation of all recommendations as outlined in “Appendix B”

Appendix A

Detailed Observations

Customers

- Arrived in line at the lobby of 2014 Main as early as 7:15 a.m.
 - Reported arrival times outside of the building as early as 6:30 a.m. (building opens at 7:00 a.m.)
 - All customers are screened by security officers as they enter the building on Harwood
 - Observed as many as 94 customers in line at 7:45 a.m. (56 in Magistrate Court, 19 in each of two service lines)
- Appeared confused and were unable to request information before 8:00 a.m. when staff arrived
 - Wandered around building
 - Stood for periods of time at information booth looking around
 - Asked security officers for information that they were either unable to, or instructed not to provide
- Majority were Spanish speaking
- Many paid in cash
- Waited several minutes in line for service
 - Observed customer wait times from as short as 19 minutes to as long as 48 minutes
 - Out of 11 available windows, observed as few as three windows opened and as many as eight windows opened at one time (not including Magistrate or Attorney windows)

Appendix A

Detailed Observations

Customers

- Presented with more than one citation
 - Customers removed “wads” of tickets from their pockets
 - Many had multiple violations on a single ticket
- Customers already in line became restless when a crowd of customers gathered at information desk
- Seemed uninformed about court process and options to dispose of citations
 - Defendants would occasionally ask customer service representatives to make a decision for them as to whether or not to set a court date or pay the fee
 - Many were unaware of the options to dispose of tickets
- Most brought family members and/or friends with them; lines appeared longer than necessary
- Did not maintain control of children
- Mistakenly stood in line for services that could only be provided by the Magistrate Court Judge
 - Dismiss “No Insurance” violations
 - Dismiss ticket based on “Time served”

Appendix A

Detailed Observations

Customer Support

- Opened first general window between 7:59 – 8:05 a.m. (2014 Main)
- Information booth first opened between 8:00 – 8:23 a.m.
- Some staff projected less than customer friendly attitudes
 - No greetings
 - No smiles
 - Appeared less than empathetic when customer did not understand options
- Periodically, Spanish speaking customers were required to step aside to wait until Spanish speaking staff became available
 - Created some confusion in the flow of the line; it became unclear as to who was next in line
 - Caused “mini” lines to form in front of various service windows
- On occasion, a “payment only” line was created by transferring customers from the main service lines
 - Created perception of “skipping” if the announcement was not heard or understood

Appendix A

Detailed Observations

Customer Support

- Complete and consistent information was not always provided
 - Options for disposition were not presented
 - The insurance declaration page was not always explained as a requirement for showing “Proof of insurance”
 - Customers were sent to the Magistrate Court “window” long after the last number had been given without explanation of the process of serving the first fifty in the morning and first forty in the afternoon
- Windows were staffed but did not accept customers
 - Staff was completing process from previous customer
 - Staff was processing documents (not sure about specific activity)
- Extremely difficult to speak with a customer representative by phone at 670-0109
 - Four out of five test calls resulted in no answer or busy signal when transferring to attendant from the Interactive Voice Response System (IVR)
 - Three out of three test calls resulted in busy signal when transferring to attendant from the IVR

Appendix A

Detailed Observations

Facilities - 2014 Main

- Limited seating available for customers
 - Only one bench provided with capacity for about nine adults
 - Lobby area is congested with traffic to and from the courts
- Inadequate signage
 - No clear signs directing traffic to specific areas for service
 - Outmoded building directory
- Atmosphere does not promote high morale, impacting customer service
 - Staff area appears dirty and cluttered with paper
 - Offices seem dark and drab
 - Furniture is old
 - Limited workspace per employee
- Building is not ADA compliant
 - Customers in wheel chairs must enter on Main Street via the exit
 - Windows are not low enough to be easily accessed by customers in wheel chairs
- Not enough parking for staff
- No space beneath window for customers to use as a writing surface
- Some amenities were non functioning
 - Pay telephone
 - ATM
 - Water fountain
- Limited restroom facilities
- A maximum of three officers visible at any time providing security for lobby area

Appendix A

Detailed Observations Facilities - Lew Sterrett

- Limited seating available for customers
 - Only one bench provided with capacity for about four adults
- Appears dark and drab
- Signs provide limited information
 - Confusion existed between City and County service windows
- Quick drop box was being used as trash can
- No system in place to form or maintain service lines
- Broadcast messages over the public announcement (PA) system were hard to understand (PA system is owned by the County)
- Atmosphere felt unsafe
 - Screening officers did not appear to provide security for the building
 - Inmates were transferred in and out of building (with security guard)
 - Potential customer appeared to be passed out in the corner; slept for three hours uninterrupted by security officers

Appendix A

Detailed Observations Technology

- Printers are extremely slow and outdated
- Five transactions may be required to dispose of one ticket
- Staff has to allocate fees on cashier screen
- Telephone system does not appear to have capacity to handle volume of calls; the problem could either be with Interactive Voice Response (IVR) or the Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system
- Entering new citations into the system took about 15 minutes
- In one sample, 14 pieces of paper were printed to process seven tickets
- Staff had to consult paper manuals for codes to process citations
- Several transactions performed manually: defensive driving, community service and work release programs

Appendix B

Customer Service Recommendations Implemented to Date

ID	Recommendation	Estimated Cost	Status
1	Assign customer service representative to monitor lines every 15 to 30 minutes		Implemented
1.1	Redirect customers to Magistrate Court or other appropriate service area		Ongoing
1.2	Ensure that customers have correct documentation before reaching service window		Ongoing
1.3	Ask parents to not leave their children unattended		Ongoing
1.4	Remove accompanying guests from service lines		Ongoing
2	Staff 2014 Main information booth at Harwood entrance		Implemented
3	Begin enhancements to staff environment to improve morale		Ongoing
3.1	Provide ergonomic seating		Implemented
3.2	Remove clutter from service windows and other staff areas		Implemented
4	Implement regular customer feedback programs		Implemented
4.1	Suggestion boxes	\$63	Implemented
4.2	Publicize existing public feedback telephone number		Implemented
5	Have staff available to provide information to the customer upon entry into the building at 7:00 a.m.		Pilot Started 11/14/2005

Appendix B

Customer Service Recommendations Implemented to Date

ID	Recommendation	Estimated Cost	Status
6	Improve availability of Spanish speaking staff		Ongoing
7	Extend window operations		Pilot Started 11/14/2005
7.1	Open windows at 7:30 a.m. at 2014 Main		Implemented
7.2	Maintain adequate number of open windows to meet performance measure for volume of customers served per hour		Implemented
7.3	Publicize 24/7 service at Lew Sterrett Justice Center		Ongoing
7.4	Adjust schedules to open more windows during lunch hours (11:00-2:00) and other peak times		Implemented
8	Provide alternate methods and locations to obtain service		Ongoing
8.1	Encourage customers to mail documents (by certified mail if proof of receipt is needed)		Ongoing
8.2	Use public relations campaigns to educate customers on options for disposing of citations (include options available before and after 21 days)		Ongoing
9	Consider alternative line management and queuing strategies		Implemented
9.1	Provide specialty windows during peak hours		Implemented

Appendix B

Customer Service Recommendations

30 Day Implementation

ID	Recommendation	Estimated Cost	Status
1	Relocate City staff so that information booth at Harwood entrance is accessible to public		In Progress
2	Provide some method to assist customers in forming a service line to the windows at Lew Sterrett (line ropes/barriers)		In Progress
3	Have staff work out of sight in the back office if not servicing customers to remove perception of not working		Inhibits Work Flow - Not implemented
4	Consider options to reduce the traffic congestion in the lobby area of 2014 Main		
4.1	Relocate Magistrate Court intake service windows and waiting lines to vacant areas upstairs		Not implemented per Judiciary request

Appendix B

Customer Service Recommendations 60 Day Implementation

ID	Recommendation	Estimated Cost	Status
1	Begin Installation of signs to direct customers to appropriate service areas	\$15K	In Progress
1.1	Magistrate Court		
1.2	Payments/bonds/court dates		
1.3	Restrooms, other amenities		
1.4	Entrances/exits/ADA assistance		
1.5	Express drop box		
1.6	Bilingual service windows		
2	Install high speed printers to support window operations	\$18K	In Progress

Appendix B

Customer Service Recommendations

90 Day Implementation

ID	Recommendation	Estimated Cost	Status
1	Consider alternative line management and queuing strategies		
1.1	Provide customers with numbers and allow them to leave the line (especially for Magistrate Court)		Pilot Proved Unsuccessful
1.2	Form single line for each window		Previous Pilot Proved Unsuccessful
1.3	Deploy "Take-A-Number" type of technology to inform customers of open service windows		Not Needed Without 2.2
1.4	Establish service by appointment and/or managed priority service for customers returning from court or earlier in the day		Created Customer Dissatisfaction
2	Consider options to reduce the traffic congestion in the lobby area of 2014 Main		
2.1	Provide service window for juror payments and after court transactions upstairs	Need Bailiff	Judge Evaluating Impact
3	Implement regular customer feedback programs		In progress
3.1	Perform exit surveys quarterly		Will Begin 04/06
3.2	Comment Cards		Will Begin 04/06
4	Coordinate with County to upgrade PA system at Low Sterrett		Not Needed Without 2.3

Appendix B

Customer Service Recommendations 180 Day and Beyond Implementation

ID	Recommendation	Estimated Cost	Status
1	Place electronic building directory at information booth(s)	\$6K	Summer 2006 Implementation
2	Provide alternate methods and locations to obtain service		
2.1	Western Union and/or Fidelity Express for payments	\$1 Customer charge Plus CIS costs	In progress
2.2	Community sub stations for payments and other court services	Kiosks will Accept Payments	Summer 2006 Implementation
3	Continue with technology upgrades on an accelerated schedule		
3.1	Replace Case Management system and integrate cashiering functionality	\$300K	Scheduled for 9/30/2007
3.2	Automate manual transactions		Wait for New System
3.3	Provide on-line help screens to eliminate reliance on paper manuals for system codes		Wait for New System
3.4	Upgrade Document Management system		Fall 2006 Implementation
3.5	Replace IVR system (explore short term enhancement options)		Summer 2006 Implementation
3.6	Provide internet and telephone payments options		Summer 2006 Implementation
3.7	Install Kiosks		Summer 2006 Implementation

Appendix B

Customer Service Recommendations 180 Day and Beyond Implementation

ID	Recommendation	Estimated Cost	Status
4	Continue enhancements to staff environment to improve morale		
4.1	Increase lighting	\$25-33K	Funding Pending
4.2	Replace carpet	\$46K	Funding Pending
5	Consider renovation options		
5.1	Install ADA service window(s)		Will be addressed via signage
5.2	Provide additional customer seating		Only Feasible in New Building
5.3	Build a concession area to supply newspapers, magazines, telephones, internet access, fax, mail, copy service, children's area and other support services for customers and employees		Pending Recommendation from Development Services
5.4	Build a customer waiting area to allow customers to be seated while waiting for service (include TV monitors, electronic marquees with scrolling information to educate waiting customers on Court and City services		Only Feasible in New Building
6	Consider moving all customer service staff under same manager (Lobby windows, information booth, phone support)		Court and Detention Services Evaluating Impact
7	Install PA system to support audio for "Take-A-Number" queuing system		Only Feasible in New Building
8	Relocate Court Services to a new location with adequate space and parking		In Bond Program

Appendix C

Statistical Analyses

