MRSC FEATURED PRACTICE

Clark County Assessor-Treasurer-Auditor Joint Lobby

Through a unique partnership, the Assessor, Treasurer, and Auditor in Clark County—three entirely independent offices—have come together to offer citizens a streamlined process for government interaction. Not only are these three offices housed in the same building, with a single shared lobby and service counter, but their customer service staff are all cross-trained to provide assistance on issues for all three offices. This means that when citizens come in to accomplish a task, they can do it quickly and easily, all in one transaction.

Program Logistics

In 2003 the Assessor, Treasurer, and Auditor moved their offices from three separate locations onto a single floor in the Clark County Public Service Center. Instead of having three service counters, the offices developed a single joint lobby where citizens come for issues involving any of the three offices.

The offices then began a program of cross-training customer service employees. Employees spend six-weeks training outside their "home office" to gain the skills and understanding to handle additional transactions required by the other two offices.

Now instead of transferring customers from one employee to another based on the transaction, all customer service employees are equipped to handle the majority of transactions that take place in the joint lobby. This has eliminated the need for a complex waiting system and allowed the offices to streamline service transactions. Customers that may not understand which office they need to talk to can talk to any customer service employee to get answers. Also, customers that need to accomplish multiple different types of tasks, such as paying a tax and recording a document, can take care of them in a single transaction.

Management of the joint lobby is cooperative. A memorandum of understanding governs the basic policies and procedures for all three offices. Customer service managers for each of the three offices manage as a team, meeting weekly to do scheduling and deal with any issues or concerns, and rotating overall management duties in the front office. Additionally, the three public officials meet monthly to stay informed on each others activities and needs. When new employees are hired for one office, the hiring process often involves input from the other two offices as well.

Results by the Numbers

Monthly customers transferred from one employee to another:

- Before Cross-Training 166
- After Cross-Training 7

Total monthly wait time for multi-transaction customers:

- Before Cross-Training 27 hours
- After Cross-Training 1.6 hours

Program Benefits

The key benefit of the joint lobby is improved customer service. Citizens no longer have to navigate the county building to multiple different offices and wait in multiple different lines to deal with certain issues. Now it all takes place in a single transaction. Further, having staff cross-trained to handle all tasks instead of just those in their department means better work flow management. During peak periods, such as property tax due dates, staff from all three offices can be deployed to stave off the rush, getting customers in and out much faster. Recent statistics show that the cross training program has eliminated around 20 hours of overall waiting per month for customers. One of the only complaints they have heard is that people are overpaying their parking meters since they don't expect their interactions to go so quickly.

The cross-training has had some internal benefits as well. The three department managers coordinate more and can better manage workloads by staggering due dates and project deadlines. There is also more flexibility in staffing as each department can "borrow" front office workers to accommodate vacation, sick leave, or all-staff meetings. As workers learn the skills of other departments they also start to see the "big picture" of the many forms and paperwork. This helps them understand why certain things are filled out in certain ways, reducing errors.

While adding responsibilities to a job seems daunting, the department heads say they've also seen a noticeable increase in employee satisfaction. More skills and knowledge means employees are more empowered to help customers with their questions. Of course, with more satisfied customers, the mood in the lobby is cheerier. And certainly having more scheduling flexibility is always appreciated.

Implementation Strategies

Learn To Love Compromise. With three different offices and no overall management, compromise is critical. Set up lots of time for discussions and check-ins and be willing to compromise personal priorities for the greater good.

Get Buy-In From the Top. Asking employees to add to their responsibilities and change their procedures can be difficult. Having full commitment from leaders at the top is critical. Employees need to be assured that they have management's full support, even through the bumps and rough patches of change.

Be Customer-Centric. Clark County's joint lobby is a work in progress; procedures and process are always adapting for greater efficiency. As there is no blueprint for success, keeping the customer's needs front and center in all decision-making ensure that progress is always measured against the best benchmark.

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