

WINTER 2009

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Focusing On The Customer

Building Highway Users' Support

Following is an excerpt from the conference keynote and closing remarks speeches delivered by John Martin, President & CEO of Southeastern Institute of Research located in Richmond, Virginia.

The 21st Century transportation system will be measured by the perception of quality. As a result, you must embrace an appreciation that it is not only actual quality but the perception of quality that drives customer satisfaction. The customer is the expert in how they use roadways - **think like the customer**.

Part of quality, though, has nothing to do with the physical roadway; rather, it is the *perceived* quality of relationship built through information provided to the public. Research has shown that customers want to be informed, and that's why communications are important. The public is willing to have a two-way relationship where they give information as well as receive information. In fact, in a recent survey by one State DOT, one-third of the respondents gave personal email addresses and volunteered to be on panels to exchange information about their transportation system. Conversely, research has never shown there is too much information disseminated; more often, there is too little. Information is part of the product itself, part of the perceived quality of the offering.

And that's why **communication is a major driver of satisfaction** - consistent, ongoing communications combined with the expected traditional attributes of the roadway (signs, pavements, roadway quality, construction, markings, etc.).

Actions You Can Take Now

Develop a Customer Satisfaction Survey - What are you doing or not doing that is having the biggest impact? What are the most significant drivers? How do customers judge you? If you can influence four or five of the customer satisfaction drivers in your state, you can increase overall customer satisfaction.

Understand Your State - Is your agency the chief transportation agency in the State, or do you represent a modality? If modal, what mix of other stakeholders impact customer satisfaction?

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Focusing On The Customer

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Establish a Rating System - Use a five-point scale. You value the top two “box scores” because they provide the opportunity to see those who gave you a ‘3.’ Yes, you’ll have better scores with a four-point scale but that doesn’t provide room for improvement. A five-point scale provides an average score, like a ‘C’ on a mid-term exam. To improve, you need to move those who gave you a ‘3.’

Understand Regional Markets - Rural environments with less congestion cannot be compared to the highly congested, heavily populated urban areas of your State. Those living in the heavily populated urban areas may have living conditions that represent greater quality of life and you may focus tremendous attention on them. But they can be more judgmental because their lives involve more everyday challenge related to the transportation system. As a result, they may be harder on you. But always remember that actions in one district influence another (i.e., commuting across districts).

Build a Customer Satisfaction Model - When you build customer satisfaction models, **what gets measured gets improved**. Take time to identify the satisfaction drivers in your State, measure them, communicate externally (with your driving public), promote them internally (with your staff) and enforce them strategically.

Invest in Communications - Reach out to roadway users and respond to their needs. Own your own media. Remember that your website is the information conduit to the driving public. In survey after survey, people that saw relevant information and were able to provide input/feedback felt more informed and familiar with the topic - and gave higher ratings of satisfaction and support. So build websites, commuter stores, construction stores, invest in the quality of your highway advisory radio transmissions. Work hand-in-hand with the public to control your message; **don’t rely on the media for delivery**.

Identify Behavior Patterns - Today’s web technology can help you identify behavior patterns of individuals and the kinds of information they need based on their personal travel patterns. Think of LL Bean - the husband receives hunting and fishing catalogs while the wife receives clothing and home furnishing catalogs ... based on their individual buying patterns.

Fortune 500s across the nation take advantage of this technology - get on the bandwagon.

Engage Affinity Groups - Look for natural affinity groups that can support you. Business is a natural ally because it has a stake in its employees’ commute. One municipality discovered that, for the first time in twenty years, business interest in transportation is at an all-time high in order to recruit and retain employees. Watch for growth and increase in mobility.

The bottom line: 21st Century transportation is rooted in customer satisfaction. Focus on the customer - it can be game-changing!



2009 National Achievement Awards

Demonstrating Outstanding Achievement in Support of the Principles of Highway Quality

Deadline For Receipt Of Nominations – May 5, 2009

The NPHQ Achievement Award is presented every two years to the roadway project team that has demonstrated outstanding achievement in support of the principles of the highway quality movement.

National Achievement Awards are evaluated based on quality process and results; customer focus; teamwork; innovation and value; and long-term improvement.

If your Federal, State, County or City Roadway Agency has an innovative, barrier breaking, customer-focused project that advanced the cause of quality, safety and customer service, download your application and join the race today!

To learn more about the National Achievement Awards visit www.nphq.org.

In the Next Issue...



How to make a business or industry “the happiest experience” imaginable for its deserving customers, from one of the world’s leading authorities on “the happy place.”

Welcome to NPHQ's Newest Partner Coffman Specialties, Inc. (CSI)

Coffman Specialties, Inc. (CSI), established in 1991, is a Certified Woman Owned Business Enterprise based in San Diego California. Coffman has successfully specialized in the construction of medium-large size public works and governmental projects. In the past fifteen (15) years Coffman has demonstrated its expertise and experience with maximum client satisfaction, establishing strong relationships with owners, designers, and contractors. These relationships, along with strong affirmative field-performance, have allowed the firm to actively pursue complex construction works on a project by project basis.

Coffman Specialties, Inc. seeks innovative construction techniques and management systems to guarantee service to its clients. The company's professionalism and personalized approach to each project distinguishes Coffman Specialties, Inc. from its competitors. All members of the organization place project needs and requirements of their clients above all other matters.

The Coffman management team has completed over forty major highway, airfield, and waterway projects

within the past fifteen years. Its work-in-progress column fluctuates between five to ten major projects. The firm is a specialized contractor, primarily focusing on specialties, such as earthmoving, bridges, and PCC pavements. Coffman Specialties, Inc. pursues innovative construction techniques and management systems to guarantee service to owners to general contractors.

Satisfaction of owners, state and federal/military is Coffman's main objective. The firm has developed and maintained an excellent reputation for its manpower, managerial coordination skills as well as its financial capabilities resulting in completed projects of the greatest value. Coffman Specialties, Inc. has proven its ability to effectively construct large, technically challenging projects.

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This project consists of demolition and reconstruction of the Route 15 and Route 56 interchange. Demolition of entire bridge super structures of both the Route 56 and Carmel Mountain Bridges. The work is staged allowing for traffic to remain open at all times on the highway and over bridges. The roadway is first widened to the outside adding multiple lanes; and then directionally managed lanes are constructed in the median. Rock excavation and extensive retaining wall construction are also part of the construction.

Le Meridien Offers Endless Innovation in Customer Service

Since its purchase by Starwood Hotels and Resorts two years ago, Le Méridien has been committed to transforming the functional and transactionally-driven hotel experience into a lifestyle model that aims to connect with its guests emotionally. Guests of Le Méridien are not tourists – they are travelers, adventurers in the world of ideas. Le Méridien’s goal is to inspire its guests to discover a new way of seeing things, not just a new destination.

Le Meridien’s newly introduced “Arrival Experience” for guests is defined and enriched by a group of cultural innovators and artists called the LM 100. The group comprises a global array of visionaries, from painters to photographers, musicians to designers, chefs to architects.

The “Arrival Experience” begins the moment the guest arrives at the hotel and continues as they open the door to their guest room. Le Meridien has turned the front desk experience on its ear, seating guests in the lobby, providing beverages and newspapers of their choice and delivering their completed paperwork when their room is ready. Other amenities include the Transitional Portal, which is a visual and audio “wall” of sound and art that will engulf each guest; a Sensory Experience illustrated through Le Meridien’s signature scent, sound and use of light; an Unlock Art program that includes an artist designed key card offering access to the guest room and to Le Meridien’s affiliated art organizations; and, the Elevated Experience, which transforms the event of riding an elevator into an “elevating experience” through video and sound.

Even Le Meridien’s website was designed as a global community for those that appreciate creativity, offering a discovery experience that starts with the guests. One of the most unique aspects of the new LeMeridien.com is its ‘Destination Canvas’. This innovative concept is unique not only in the hospitality industry, but in the online environment. The ‘Canvas’ offers a creative platform with a purpose that connects guests’ personal interests with Le Méridien hotels and destinations. It matches the experiences guests are seeking and recommends destinations based on what each guest creates.

For customers looking for a trip that could include cuisine, arts, fashion, beach, spa, or golf, the ‘Destination Canvas’ allows guests to select visuals from an image library that depicts their desired experience and interests. Once guests make their selection, the images

depicting their passion points are placed on a white canvas. After selecting the images, guests can adapt the size and position to signify the importance of the experience, LeMeridien.com provides destination recommendations that reflect the guests’ passions. Guests may also email their personal ‘Destination Canvas’ to friends and family.

Le Méridien room keys open more than just doors. They open new perspectives. Featuring commissioned work by select contemporary artists, these collectible keys also act as passports to cultural centers near select Le Méridien hotels.”



Make the Le Meridien Model Work for You

Today’s roadway customers are growing more and more sophisticated. That’s why you need not only to serve but to inspire them in order to gain their maximum commitment to the nation’s transportation investment. How?

Build a Roadway User Group

Those who appreciate the system and its details are the ones with the ability to see things first. They’re the people who notice the tilted picture hanging on the wall in your office. They pay attention to the details.

Build your group with school teachers, local artists, writers, architects, interior decorators, photographers, graphic designers and more. These are the people who create rather than conform, who tend to “feel,” surface and express what may remain latent in others. They will help you reach the root of your customers’ feelings. Make them your focus point to help get you to the bottom of customer desires and thus customer service.

Ask your User Group to visit your website, look at roadway signage, visit your commuter store, look at roadway markings, etc.

Then schedule several Roadway User Group sessions to discuss observations and ask questions. Their input should help forge your path to new and improved customer responsiveness.

Looking Forward

Defining the Future for NPHQ

The NPHQ Survey: "Quality in the United States Highway Program"

This year NPHQ is refocusing its program to identify and more directly promote best practices to assure the quality of delivered highway projects. To most accurately focus its future endeavors, NPHQ is seeking input from those who are on the front line of roadway delivery. **Watch for your survey soon. Your answers will provide critical insight to guide NPHQ and shape the quality agenda.**

Steering Committee Meeting Preview

NPHQ defines quality in the U.S. highway program to be delivering the safest, best-performing, longest lasting bridges and roadways that the available revenue and American ingenuity can build. On a random basis, that level of quality is being achieved by certain projects. On the remainder, it seems best practices are sometimes sacrificed or do not rise to become driving factors in decision-making. Should this presumption be true, the return on investment of tax revenues designated for highways and transportation systems is also being compromised. Such compromises should be eliminated. The question is how?

The NPHQ Steering Committee believes the answer lies in creating a culture within the highway community, including every State, Federal and Municipal transportation agency employee and every private highway industry employee that focuses on cooperative partnerships working to achieve continuous quality improvement. Working together, we can find the best solutions and implement innovative improvements in design, materials, equipment, construction methods, schedules, work zones, safety, workmanship, preservation and maintenance needed to keep the U.S. highway system at peak performance. NPHQ's purpose is to champion that focus.

At its April Steering Committee Meeting, morning discussions will include results of the NPHQ Survey and a brainstorming session on strengths, weaknesses and influences that impact (or could impact) highway quality. From survey comments and suggestions, Steering Committee members will develop strategies to overcome weaknesses and build on strengths,

to identify how NPHQ is positioned to address each strategy and to assess implementation capabilities. The afternoon will focus on the future, from high priority strategies to action items, marketing, funding and more.

This meeting lays the foundation for an NPHQ organization that addresses the challenges of 21st Century roadway quality.

If you have any questions or would like to provide input to the Steering Committee in addition to your response to the NPHQ Survey, please direct your comments via email to NPHQ Executive Director, Bob Templeton at btemplenphq@aol.com.

And watch for NPHQ Steering Committee results in the next newsletter.

ROLL CALL

Planes, Trains, Automobiles ... and Bikes

Roll Call's Transportation Policy Briefing

February 22, 2009

- What issues are likely to take center stage during the upcoming debate over highway reauthorization?
- How will the government pay for all the transportation projects it needs to fund?
- How will environmental priorities mesh with the nation's infrastructure and economic needs as Congress debates highway reauthorization?

To learn more, visit <http://www.rollcall.com/multimedia/video/32512-1.html>.

About Roll Call

Since 1955, *Roll Call* has delivered coverage of the people, politics, process and policy on Capitol Hill. With accurate, unbiased reporting, *Roll Call* provides its readers with the tools, data and access to understand and influence Congress.



Take The Plunge

Establish a State Quality Partnership Today

Do you have . . .

- A Charter that establishes mission, goals and policies for improvement of highway quality in your jurisdiction?
- Partners that include the State Department of Transportation, an FHWA Division as well as City, County and other highway, road and street related partners?
- Partnership leadership that includes at least one member of the public sector and one member from the private sector?
- At least one meeting each year?
- An ongoing program to identify and recognize outstanding achievements of leaders in the quality journey in your geographic area?
- Identified innovations and best practices that have been instrumental in quality improvement achievements in your area?

If you answered “Yes” to each of the above questions, visit http://www.nphq.org/state_quality.cfm and download your Application for Tier 1 Accreditation today!

With Tier 1 Accreditation, you take the first step in the journey toward formalizing cooperative partnerships that develop, deliver and preserve high quality highway systems.

NPHQ is a groundbreaking partnership between:

- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
- American Concrete Pipe Association (ACPA)
- The Associated General Contractors of America (AGC)
- Coffman Specialties, Inc. (CSI)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Granite Construction Company
- National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies (NICET)
- Kiewit Corporation
- RedVector
- Skanska USA Civil
- Texas Transportation Institute (TTI)
- URS Corporation
- Williams Brothers Construction Company, Inc.

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