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## Paper Session III-B - Developing a Customer-Centered Organization: Customer Advocacy at the Cape Canaveral Spaceport

Linda Buckles

Jean Matkovich

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**An Approach for Developing Customer Focus at  
Kennedy Space Center  
By Linda Buckles**

**BACKGROUND**

The customer is the business. Peter Drucker established this paradigm when he described how to approach business challenges to maximize economic performance. Other leading quality and management experts agree. The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, administered by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, allocates 20% of the total available points to customer and market knowledge and performance. And, the stock of Baldrige winners has collectively outperformed the S&P 500 stock average by 400-500%.

And, the space industry has recognized this trend. *The 1999 State of the Space Industry* report identified "Customer Service Takes Center Stage" as one of the top ten industry trends. Customer and customer systems are becoming a larger part of the operations for a number of space organizations, including the Kennedy Space Center (KSC).

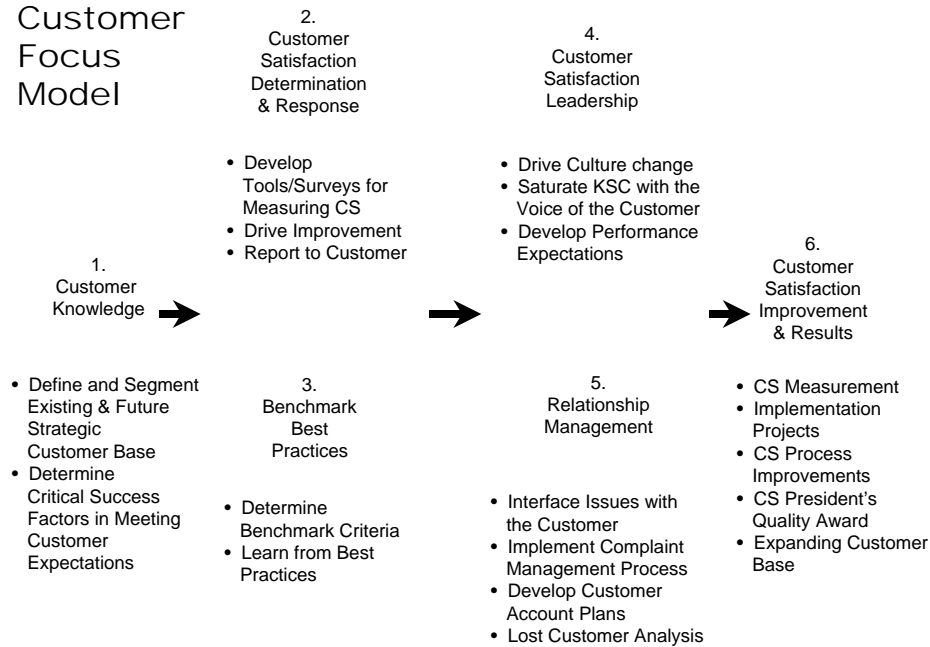
NASA, at KSC, is undergoing a transformation. In addition to the operations and insight role of NASA, a Spaceport Technology Center is under development, focusing on the technologies related to launch and launch vehicle processing system, payload and payload carrier processing systems, and landing and recovery systems. KSC's development of these technologies will be driven by customer and market needs.

As a means to support the transformation, customer focus is one of KSC's major strategic initiatives. The concept of customer focus is more than the usual customer satisfaction survey system. Customer focus is created by interweaving knowledge, leadership and culture, strategy, customer relationships, measures of effectiveness, and a system of aggregated customer feedback, producing process improvement targets and new opportunities.

**THE MODEL**

Based on exhaustive research, KSC developed a customer focus model (see figure 1). The model delineates a six-element scope defined as follows:

## Customer Focus Model



- 1. Customer Knowledge:** This element defines and segments current and potential strategic customers and identifies their needs, with additional information gathered regarding their requirements, expectations, and critical success factors.
- 2. Customer Satisfaction Determination and Response:** These processes include collecting feedback from multiple types of methods over the duration of the customer experience at KSC, feeding that information back to the appropriate organizations, using the information to drive improvement projects, and reporting the improvements back to the customer.
- 3. Benchmark Best Practices:** Benchmarking becomes an ongoing process of seeking out continual improvements in both the practices and processes of improving customer satisfaction.
- 4. Customer Satisfaction Leadership:** This element uses the previous element results to create a customer-keeping vision, to saturate KSC with the voice of the customer, and to develop employee performance expectations related to customer focus.
- 5. Relationship Management:** Relationship management uses processes for interfacing and supporting the customer to maximize customer loyalty and retention and analyzes complaints and lost customers.

- 6. Customer Satisfaction Improvement and Results:** This element develops and tracks customer service standards based on outcomes from the previous elements, including customer satisfaction metrics and customer business results for KSC.

We are using this model as the blueprint to develop and implement processes and leadership for a customer-driven KSC. Once implemented, the results of the processes will be used as an integral component of the Center's strategic planning efforts.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### **Customer Knowledge**

We have a database of demographic information about customers and their respective projects. This information, coupled with information conceptualized in Element 5 (Relationship Management), will create a knowledge capture system about our customers and how we can help them be successful. This information will help in strategic planning, preparation for customer visits, and evaluations of progress.

### **Customer Satisfaction Determination and Response**

KSC, along with the Air Force, Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Enterprise Florida (collectively known as the Cape Canaveral Spaceport) has completed a baseline customer satisfaction survey for the spaceport's strategic customers. From the results of this survey, the CCS has been able to identify key gaps in customer satisfaction. Process teams have been formed and trained to determine root causes and develop solutions to close these gaps.

KSC has also developed a system for capturing both quantitative and qualitative customer feedback and for aggregating that feedback over time to produce trends of need process or interface improvements.

### **Benchmarking**

We have benchmarked several large corporations, such as Xerox and Honeywell, to capture their best practices in customer systems.

### **Leadership**

To date, numerous customer awareness and training sessions have been presented on issues such as best practices and customer segmentation.

A periodic internal management survey has been engaged to test the development of the customer systems and their effectiveness in dealing with customers and new business.

Leaders for customer segments and process improvement teams have organized and have been trained in areas related to customer segmentation and process development and improvement.

On a higher level, a Cape Canaveral Spaceport (CCS) Customer Focus Team has been formed between NASA/KSC, Air Force, Boeing, Lockheed-Martin and Enterprise Florida to streamline interfaces, increase customer satisfaction, and leverage resources and projects.

### **Relationship Management**

KSC has developed a Customer Connection web site (<http://customer.ksc.nasa.gov>) to enable customers view the full range of products and services provided by KSC and the Cape Canaveral Spaceport. Points of contact for these products and services are listed to provide customers with direct accessibility. Within the Customer Connection website, a Customer Forum (<http://hq4.ksc.nasa.gov/ccf/default.htm>) enables customers to submit comments, questions, or complaints. We back up the online complaint system with a complete process and system structure to ensure effective complaint management.

Customer segment leaders have begun an organized strategy process for detailed customer needs analysis and how the Cape Canaveral Spaceport will respond to those needs.

### **Customer Satisfaction Improvement and Results**

A major customer satisfaction assessment was conducted across the Cape Canaveral Spaceport's customer base. This survey provided a baseline set of metrics from which the CCS will be able to track satisfaction over time. Additional metrics to track partnerships and the customer base and are under construction.

### **CONCLUSION**

As Kennedy Space Center evolves to becoming a Spaceport Technology Center, with a focus on the NASA goals of increasing safety, reducing costs and enabling expansion of commercial markets, the importance of the customer and market needs cannot be understated. It is hoped that the approach and the plans depicted in the Customer Focus Model will help KSC and the CCS achieve its objectives.