



CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY | 2013

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Overview

At the City of Brantford we value our customers, **both internally and externally**. We are committed to providing customer service excellence while serving all customers in all aspects of our business.

Today, many organizations are faced with significant challenges in the area of customer service and service delivery for both internal and external customers. The constant change in demographics coupled with high customer expectations is making organizations rethink their customer service strategies.

In 2011 the City of Brantford began to assess the current state of customer service within the organization, to research leading practices, and to develop recommendations in order to provide the City with a strategy for becoming a leader in customer service excellence. As a result of the research conducted and recommendations presented, City Council committed financial resources to the ongoing development of this Customer Service Strategy, staff training and development and the implementation of a long-term customer-focused plan.



The Customer Service Strategy aligns our customer service commitment with our customer service vision, guiding principles, guidelines, resource allocation, and approved implementation plan. These will establish the **Customer One Program** as the customer service standard for the City of Brantford.

Snapshot of the Future

Vision

The City of Brantford will be recognized as a fiscally responsible and well-managed City that provides efficient and effective government services to its customers and stakeholders while ensuring accessibility through a wide range of service channels, making it an easy and positive experience to deal with the City.

Guiding Principles

The City of Brantford is committed to excellence in serving all customers. We value our customers both internally and externally, and are committed to providing excellent customer service in every aspect of our business through the Customer One Program. In order to do that, the following guiding principles were established to provide customer service excellence and should be used for making internal and external customer related decisions and integrated into the day-to-day business practices at the City of Brantford.

Customer One means that we will...

- ▶ Serve all customers with professionalism, skill, and knowledge
- ▶ Act with integrity and treat you with dignity and respect
- ▶ Treat you fairly while complying with all our policies, by-laws and regulations.
- ▶ Ensure our services are accessible for all customers
- ▶ Respond to your requests in a timely, accurate manner
- ▶ Identify ourselves to you by using our first name and the department in which we work
- ▶ Provide our service in the most cost-effective and timely manner possible
- ▶ Be flexible while applying judgment and discretion
- ▶ Serve the general public, fellow staff members and Council well
- ▶ Be fair, honest and consistent
- ▶ Be courteous and helpful
- ▶ Be accountable to all customers and use feedback to improve our performance and service to our customers
- ▶ Ensure all customer service guidelines, standards and processes are accessible to all
- ▶ Measure and improve work processes by implementing innovative ideas, applying appropriate technology, training staff to be helpful and knowledgeable, and encouraging teamwork among staff

The Strategy

This strategy outlines how the City of Brantford will put internal and external customers at the centre of service delivery to ensure an enhanced service experience, and increase the choices of customers as to where they access services, when they access services and how they access services. It is further designed to ensure that the City continues to provide services that are consistent, professional and coordinated to ensure customers are satisfied, where possible, at the first point of contact.

This strategy describes the long-term vision of the City of Brantford in its continuous efforts to meet the needs of our customers and stakeholders in Brantford.

To improve customer accessibility to City services and meet customer expectations, all departments must come together to harness collective knowledge, creativity and initiative to provide outstanding service. Customer service excellence is no longer just the responsibility of the front-line staff, and must receive commitment at all levels within the City of Brantford as **Customer One** becomes the new standard.

What We'll Do

- ▶ **Create a Customer-Centred Culture**
- ▶ **Corporate Customer Service Guidelines and Policies**
- ▶ **Streamlining**
- ▶ **Respond to the Needs of Our Customers**

How We'll Do It

- ▶ **Business Processes & Streamlining**
- ▶ **Information Technology**
- ▶ **Improved Telephone System**
- ▶ **People**
- ▶ **Accessibility**
- ▶ **Ongoing Communication**

What Will We Do?



FOCUS

STRATEGY: Create a Customer-Centred Culture

In order to be truly customer-centred, an organization must integrate its entire range of business functions around satisfying the needs of internal and external customers while containing costs, leveraging technology and embracing a customer-centred culture. Becoming customer-centred requires an organization to focus on processes that are customer friendly, and ensure that staff are dedicated to excellence in service delivery and communicate with our customers.

Corporate culture can be defined as the attitudes, behaviours, values and personalities that make up an organization. Part of the corporate culture is also the value the organization places on customer service excellence.

We will ...

- ▶ Communicate the vision, guiding principles, corporate customer service guidelines and policies as core values and expectations of the organization both internally and externally
- ▶ Promote a customer service program for staff members
- ▶ Continue to evaluate the performance and satisfaction levels of customer service excellence both internally and externally
- ▶ Integrate accountability for customer service standards into performance management measures



STRATEGY: Update Corporate Customer Service Guidelines & Policies

We will ...

- ▶ Review and establish, on an ongoing basis, customer service guidelines and policies that define the level of service customers can expect and help to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all, while reflecting the guiding principles of the organization
- ▶ Establish corporate-wide reporting to monitor service levels



STRATEGY: Streamlining

We will ...

- ▶ Maximize first contact resolution
- ▶ Update current service delivery database for relevancy and accuracy as an immediate measure and to form the basis of a customer relationship management tool
- ▶ Conduct a review of current telephone systems and investigate improved telephony service options
- ▶ Review customer service counters and the opportunities for self-service through community access points and/or service channels (kiosks at community facilities, on-line information centre)
- ▶ Continue to explore options for working with other agencies and organizations
- ▶ Increase information sharing between all departments
- ▶ Ensure that an integrated and coordinated approach to service delivery and management across all channels is utilized while streamlining sources for customers and employees regardless of how accessed



STRATEGY: Respond to Needs of Our Internal and External Customers

We will ...

- ▶ Communicate corporate customer service guidelines and policies
- ▶ Provide streamlined sources for citizens and employees regardless of how accessed
- ▶ Continue to be responsive to customers through proactive engagement and solicitation of their satisfaction levels
- ▶ Continually assess the services being offered and the available access points to ensure customer needs are being met
- ▶ Continue to evolve our customer service guidelines, policies, processes and methods of accessibility to meet the ongoing and ever-changing needs of the customers and stakeholders we serve
- ▶ Benchmark service availability and standards and compare with the leading practices of other municipalities; modify where warranted
- ▶ Work to ensure that departments have an effective customer feedback system in place that enables both internal and external customers to comment on their services and provide suggestions for improvement
- ▶ Conduct service satisfaction surveys with the community and staff to gauge awareness and approval of service quality and levels both internally and externally

How Will We Do It?

In order to deliver the Customer Service Strategy, the City needs the infrastructure in place along with skilled and trained staff. Excellent customer service can only be delivered by providing staff with current, easy to access, relevant data and information. This, in turn, is achieved through the use of enabling technologies and supporting efficient and effective business processes.



STRATEGY: Business Processes & Streamlining

Every business, regardless of type, operates as a collection of business processes. Each process starts with a request and is completed with the delivery of service. To enable continuous service improvement and the delivery of efficient and effective services that are valued by the customers and stakeholders of the community, business processes of the corporation must be reviewed and updated.

We will ...

- ▶ Ensure that processes are designed to add value for the customer—processes serve a purpose, are efficient and effective, accessible and meet the needs of customers
- ▶ Review key business processes against standards on a regular basis to ensure continuous improvement using various process mapping and customer relationship management systems (CRM)
- ▶ Create a service inventory for the City that identifies service contacts, owners, processes and a strategy that supports review efforts



STRATEGY: Information Technology

For organizations to be effective, the right tools and technologies have to be in place and integrated with the appropriate business systems in order to deliver the most value. As business strategies and objectives evolve to accommodate the changing needs of customers, new technologies must be implemented to ensure easy access to City services that are delivered in a consistent and accurate manner, regardless of the channel utilized to access the information.

We will ...

- ▶ Continue to enhance www.brantford.ca and www.mybrantford.ca with greater service information and accessibility
- ▶ Use management information systems to analyze and improve service delivery
- ▶ Explore and propose a CRM solution that has the ability to integrate with other City systems and technologies and implement
- ▶ Update and integrate the service delivery knowledge base for services with the proposed CRM software
- ▶ Explore potential of using existing service delivery knowledge base application for customers that will be accessible through the City website and/or mobile applications
- ▶ Continue to develop and increase the availability and potential for online information, transactions, e-solutions and mobile applications
- ▶ Continue to enhance the intranet for internal customers and employees
- ▶ Continue to comply with Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) technology-related standards



STRATEGY: Improved Telephone System

Today's organizations are constantly facing pressures to improve the customer experience. Telephone systems should be responsive, flexible and enable a consistent level of service and access regardless of which municipal location.

We will...

- ▶ Continue to investigate and explore options for improving our phone system or migrate to a telephony system to allow for one system that will function between multiple locations
- ▶ Target improvement areas, internal voice recognition and automated attendant possibilities
- ▶ Integrate, where possible, telephony technology with other City systems and technologies



STRATEGY: People

The key component to any organization is people. Excellent customer service can only be delivered by well-trained and supported staff members who exemplify a customer-centred service culture. Getting the right people and providing the right training is perhaps one of the biggest determining factors of how successful an organization is when it comes to the delivery of quality customer service. An organization must rely on its staff to deliver service results. Quality customer service is achieved primarily through having well-trained, responsive, accountable and professional staff that ensure a consistent approach to service delivery.

We will...

- ▶ Commit to making customer service training and development a high priority
- ▶ Develop a customized customer service training program that includes information on the vision, guiding principles, guidelines, resources, tools and technologies used to provide efficient and effective delivery of customer service at the City of Brantford
- ▶ Invest in training and development to ensure that staff at all levels have the appropriate and relevant skills and training to deliver excellent customer service to both internal and external customers. This program will be offered to existing staff and become a requirement for new employees to ensure consistency of customer service delivery
- ▶ Ensure that 'customer focus' and customer service competency are a central component of performance development plans and the performance management system throughout the entire organization
- ▶ Recognize employees for their contribution to customer service excellence through the development of a fair, effective employee recognition program
- ▶ Seek staff input on service improvement areas on a regular basis and modify practices or processes as required
- ▶ Explore how customer service awareness can be further integrated into the hiring process
- ▶ Ensure access and awareness of communication tools to enhance customer service standards and practices



STRATEGY: Ensure Access to Services

To ensure community access to services that are barrier-free, accessible and consistent with AODA regulations, municipalities must review their customer service standards and practices.

We will...

- ▶ Continue to improve the accessibility of City-owned facilities
- ▶ Provide enhanced services that are barrier-free
- ▶ Continue to enhance customer service standards to ensure access to all customers and stakeholders and ensure AODA compliance
- ▶ Provide multiple channels and access points for all customers



STRATEGY: Ongoing Communication

Transforming an organization to become more customer-centred involves an increased focus on communication. Information must be shared with the both internal and external customers and stakeholders in an effort to provide improved customer service.

We will...

- ▶ Develop, design, and distribute materials to communicate the Customer Service Strategy and guidelines to our customers, both internal and external, staff, Council and community stakeholders using various communication tools, techniques and channels
- ▶ Communicate using clear simple language while ensuring transparency and openness
- ▶ Build public awareness of the services the City provides through various communication channels
- ▶ Provide updates on a regular basis to any changes or modifications as part of the strategy

How Will We Measure Customer Service?

Fundamental to any effective customer service program are the satisfaction levels of the customers served. During the implementation of the Customer Service Strategy, a number of core activities will take place to provide for the benchmarking of services, service level expectations, reporting mechanisms and opportunities for internal and external customers to provide feedback, which will form the foundation for measurement of success. These methods of measuring performance and satisfaction levels will be integrated into the ongoing review process of **Customer One**. The feedback will provide for continuous improvement to processes, information, methods of service delivery and accessibility.

Governance

The final Customer Service Strategy will be subject to approval of the Senior Management Team and Council. Additional responsibilities associated with this strategy include:

Customer Service Taskforce

- ▶ Assist and provide input into the development of a Customer Service Strategy and implementation plan that is applicable to both internal and external customers
- ▶ Assist in the gathering and communication of information to and from respective departments
- ▶ Consider and approve recommendation of the strategy to Council
- ▶ Provide ongoing feedback and support
- ▶ Continue to support the research, identification and planning of customer service projects and monitor implementation of recommendations approved by City Council

Executive Management Team

- ▶ Consider and approve recommendation of the strategy
- ▶ Ensure the strategy aligns with the goals of the corporation
- ▶ Review and recommend refinements to the strategy over time as well as plans and required investments
- ▶ Identify staff resources to assist with the implementation plan outlined in the strategy

Organizational Leadership Team

- ▶ Manage service delivery to ensure focus on the customer and excellent customer service
- ▶ Assist in creating a customer-centred culture in departments by integrating customer service into staff communications and meetings
- ▶ Each department as part of the strategy should develop specific business processes to meet the customer service standards set and determine key performance indicators to track in order to measure results

Resources

As part of the work to develop and implement the strategy, the resource requirements will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure ongoing management of customer service excellence. Any additional resource requirements will be identified and communicated through the Senior Management Team, the Customer Service Taskforce and addressed through Council and, if required, through the regular budget process.

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