



Council Strategy

Customer Service

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102 North Road, Yakamia WA 6330
PO Box 484, Albany WA 6331
Tel: (+61 8) 9841 9333
Fax: (+61 8) 9841 4099
staff@albany.wa.gov.au
www.albany.wa.gov.au

1. Executive Summary

The main function of Local Government is to provide essential services to the residents of the area. Every task that we undertake here at the City of Albany stems from community need. Every member of City staff is a Customer Service Officer, whatever their title may be.

The City of Albany provide a staggering variety of services, generally with little mess and less fuss, yet there is little acknowledgement of their efforts by the community.

With this strategy, we hope to provide a context for both the people who work for the City and the people to whom they provide service.

As part of our research to discover our strategic direction, we performed an extensive review of common practice in the local government sector. We also interviewed staff at management level in every area of the City. We discovered the following customer service challenges:

- 1.1 The public do not generally understand the work that we do or recognise its value.
- 1.2 Communication can break down between residents and staff because residents seem to find documentation difficult to read or understand; particularly forms and contracts.
- 1.3 Staff in other departments seem unaware of existing priorities or work-flows when requesting work be carried out.
- 1.4 The Customer Service Commitment has faded to a dim memory.
- 1.5 Staff are not specifically trained in Customer Service and sometimes have no personal strategies for dealing with customer related situations, particularly when those fall outside of their usual experience.

In order to combat the issues above, we have identified two key focus areas.

- 1.6 Focus area one is to support our people by providing greater structure around customer service, more comprehensive training and a framework for internal customer service.
- 1.7 Focus area two is to engage the community by informing them about what we do, giving them the opportunity to provide us with meaningful feedback on a regular basis and making our communication with them clearer and easier to understand.

In our conversations with City staff, we also discovered a universal sense of pride in the organisation and the City it represents. We heard stories about teamwork, trust and understanding between colleagues. We discovered a passion for Customer Service and recognition that the service we provide is the beating heart of City of Albany.

2. Strategic Context

This strategy directly relates to the following elements from the Albany Insight ~ Beyond 2020 Corporate Plan...

Priority Goals and Objectives:

Goal 4: Governance: The City of Albany will be an industry leader in good governance and service delivery.

Objective 4.1: Deliver excellent community services that meet the needs and interests of our diverse communities

3. Strategic Focus Areas

In order to provide excellent Customer Service, we focus on two key areas.

3.1 Support Our People

Without the right tools, it's impossible for the City staff to give the very best service they are capable of. Clear expectations are the first and most important facet of this area and we set this expectation from the very first day a new member of staff begins, ongoing throughout their City career.

- 3.1.1 We have refreshed the Customer Service Commitment and Service Standards to ensure relevance to all our staff and our community.
- 3.1.2 All new staff are required to attend a full day Customer Service Induction and Training session. At this training session, the parameters are set by the Customer Service Commitment and Service Standards.
- 3.1.3 We provide staff with the tools they need for providing great service, interpersonal communication and dealing with difficult people.
- 3.1.4 All staff are taken to see the external sites such as ALAC, the Depot, VAC, The Library and the Town Hall as the second half of the training day.
- 3.1.5 Our approach to Customer Service is consistent from one department to the next and no department is exempt from providing their staff with the training or honouring the commitment.
- 3.1.6 All staff members are introduced to the Internal Customer Service prioritisation model, which provides a framework for inter- and intra-departmental resourcing.
- 3.1.7 Every two years, staff are required to attend a refresher session, again a half day, at which they share some real life experience with each other and top up their internal resources to go out and serve the ratepayers with renewed vigour.

3.2 Engage Our Community

Excellent Customer Service is only truly possible when the people delivering the service have a genuine empathy with the people they are serving.

We build relationships between Council staff and the Albany community by opening the lines of communication between them, encouraging an organic flow of ideas and a greater mutual understanding.

- 3.2.1 Bi-annually, we release a booklet which outlines the different functions of Council which is available from all Council buildings and posted out on request.
- 3.2.2 Twice a year, we hold a Community Info Expo to inform the residents of upcoming and progressing
- 3.2.3 Our website is dynamic, easy to use and up to date and as much as possible, our customers are able to do business with us online.
- 3.2.4 All written communications, including contracts, from the City are written in plain English and use unambiguous language.
- 3.2.5 We contact twenty random customers, spread across all departments, each month to gain constructive feedback and compliments from the people that use our services.
- 3.2.6 The Community Scorecard is continually redesigned to ensure it truly reflects the views of Albany residents

4. Key Action Plan

4.1 Support Our People

4.1.1 Launch refreshed Customer Service Commitment to staff and community	
Timeframe	April 2009
Resources	\$2000 in 08/09 budget
Officer	MCS/CSO
References	

4.1.2 Design Customer Service Induction and Training Module and begin delivery	
Timeframe	June 2009
Resources	\$2000 in 08/09 budget
Officer	MCS/HRO
References	

4.1.3 Design Internal Prioritisation Model and train staff in use	
Timeframe	June 2009
Resources	
Officer	MCS/CSO
References	

4.2 Engage Our Community

4.2.1 Begin Monthly Customer Surveys	
Timeframe	April 2009
Resources	
Officer	MCS/CSO
References	

4.2.2 Design 'What the Council Does' Booklet and distribute	
Timeframe	July 2009
Resources	\$3500 in 08/09 budget
Officer	MCS/PRO
References	

4.2.3 Evaluation of all Corporate Documents, Forms and Contracts	
Timeframe	10 documents per month beginning April 2009, ongoing
Resources	
Officer	MCS/MES/PRO
References	

4.2.4 All Forms Available On-line	
Timeframe	Current, Ongoing
Resources	
Officer	MCS/ITA/PRO
References	

5. Performance Measurement

Action	Measure	Time Frame
5.1 Monthly Survey Results improve incrementally and demonstrate Commitment standards being met.	90%	Achieved by October 2009 and maintained thereafter
5.2 Monthly Mail Report shows staff are conforming to Customer Service Commitment Service Standards	90%	Achieved by October 2009 and maintained thereafter
5.3 Training Program	95% of staff have attended either Induction or Refresher training	October 2009
5.4 Scorecard Survey shows improved results	10 percentage points	2009 survey (results delivered March 2010)
5.5 Climate Survey shows improved Customer Service recognition results	10 percentage points	2009 survey (results delivered January 2010)
5.6 Internal Customer Service Prioritisation Model in place	Random checks show 100% use	October 2009
5.7 'What the Council Does' Booklet	Released and distributed	October 2009
5.8 All Written Communications conform to the Communication Guide and Corporate Documents Policy.	10 documents per month evaluated	Ongoing
5.9 All Forms Available On-line	As identified	Ongoing

6. Review

Manager: Customer Services to review on or before 30/06/2012

7. Associated Documents

- Customer Service Policy
- Customer Service Commitment
- Corporate Document Policy
- Communication Guidelines
- Information Management Policy