**Customer Experience Drives Program Performance in Public Sector:**

**Case Study:**

**County of San Diego's Aging & Independence Services Contact Center**

**Performance Excellence**

**County of San Diego**

Jurisdiction Population: Approximately 3 million

County Manager Name: Helen Robbins-Meyer (current), Walt Ekard (CAO during this project implementation)

Innovation Award Consideration: Yes

Rapid Fire Session: Yes

Project Leader: Wendi Brick

President and CEO

(Co-presenter: Lourdes Ramirez, County of San Diego Aging & Independence Services)

Customer Service Advantage, Inc.

760.445.6550

wbrick@thecsaedge.com

555 West Country Club Lane, C-350

Escondido, CA 92026

**Intent of the Project/Program/Service**

The intent of the County of San Diego's Aging & Independence Services Contact Center's Customer Service Excellence Program was to focus on the customer experience as the driver for program success. The public sector customers' experience relies on both quantitative measures (how much/how fast) and qualitative measures (how well) to drive key performance indicators such as First Contact Resolution.

**Cost/Savings**

The costs were--hardware/software for monitoring quality, staff time including time spent in training, program customization costs (consulting)--widely variable, depending on what is already in place and what is need to meet program needs.

The saving was on staffing. If calls are processed faster and more efficiently, both during actual talk time and after call work, and customers only need to call once (first contact resolution) instead of multiple calls, less permanent staff are needed to respond to the call volume.

**Innovation Characteristics**

Public sector agencies continue to move toward increased reliance on "contact centers" to make first impressions and resolve issues, and exemplified by California's strategy for widening the safety net and serving many more customers through contact centers after Health Care Reform. The success of AIS should be a model for other contact centers looking for answers in their efforts to optimize their customers' experiences.

**Obstacles**

The obstacles are primarily budgetary, as the implementation costs must be approved. Other obstacles may be staff acceptance of the "new ways". That is addressed through careful inclusion and collaboration with staff at all levels of the organization, as well as proactive program management, change management, and communication with everyone involved.

**Applicable Results and Real World Practicality**

To produce successful and sustainable results it is imperative to apply the "Six Essential Elements" (TM) of creating a culture of service in the contact center. If the focus is on high customer satisfaction, first contact resolution, and workforce optimization, success such as the success shown in these statistics is possible.

Measure Before After

Avg Speed of Answer 6:13 Minutes 0:59 Minutes

Abandoned Calls 323 Calls 61 Calls

Avg After Call Work Time 24:51 Minutes 16:10 Minutes

Max Delay 50:51 Minutes 15:06 Minutes

Call Volume per month 1122 Calls 1275 Calls

The outcomes were a dramatic improvement in the call center.

The methodology of identifying gaps in the service quality programs, and then implementing programs with a team to drive results is a specifically methodology that has been repeated in multiple contact centers, and in areas of providing government service that have other modes of customer contact: for example at public counters and in the field. The methodology is highly repeatable, and is described and supplemented by "The Science of Service: Six Essential Elements for Creating a Culture of Service in the Public Sector" Brick, 2010. (See http://icma.org/en/press/bookstore/member\_authors/member\_books and www.TheScienceOfService.info)

**Consultant Information**

Customer Service Advantage, Inc. was engaged by the County of San Diego’s Area Agency on Aging to work with their Aging and Independence Services contact center. AIS asked for outside expertise to first pinpoint what could be done to improve service to internal and external customers, and then to implement the priority projects that were identified.