



# THE EXTRAORDINARY TEAM

PLEASE ROUTE TO

Tips and techniques to improve  
the way your teams work.

## Customer Service Teams *By Dr. Marlene Caroselli*

“If you don't know where you're going,” Yogi Berra once noted, “you could wind up somewhere else.” His simple but sage advice is especially true for Customer Service teams.

Without a clear statement of purpose, without a well-defined direction, without a specified destination, Customer Service teams can easily wind up somewhere other than where they intended to be. Time and effort are not the only resources lost when such outcomes occur: morale decreases and the cause of the customer is set back rather than advanced.

Effective Customer Service teams begin by asking the general question “What makes customers happy?” To obtain the critical clarity needed for success with team projects, they then ask more specific questions--all of these at the first several team meetings, all of these before the actual mission is



written and approved. The following 8-P Model will assist Customer Service teams as they work to address customer concerns.

**People:** To whom are we responsible? What expectations does senior management, the leader and the members have of each other? What do our customers want/expect/deserve/desire/need? How do we know?

**Places:** How welcome do customers feel when they contact our place of business? Is customer feedback located in one place and is it easily accessible? How well do customer service

representatives inside the company support those on the outside (those who are in the field, for example)?

**Priorities:** What are the priorities for our organization? for our industry? management? our customer? the government? society? How will it impact the way we do business?

*(cont'd page 2)*

### In this issue . . .

*Team Activities:  
A Quick Vote*

*Visuals Keep Focus*

*From Chariots to  
Railroads*

*From the Bookshelf:  
Leading Change*



## Mission & Vision

Mission defines your team's core purpose or reason-for-being as concisely and clearly as possible. The mission is the foundation for all team's efforts. It defines what the team does, and more importantly, defines what it *doesn't* do.

A vision, on the other hand, is the team's declaration of its future. Vision is a long term, over-arching team goal. The vision typically states:

- What and where the team wants to be - A vivid description of the most desirable future.

- When the team wants to achieve this - usually three to seven years in the future.

When well-crafted, the statement paints a vivid picture of the preferred future and energizes a team to move toward that vision together.

## E-Mail & Voicemail are Invaluable

Are you sharing information with all of your team members? Do you routinely pass along important discussions you had, things you learned, or intelligence you gathered?

If you are like many people, you'll tell those you are close to, or wait until the next meeting before you share information.

But today's teams can't wait. They are highly dependent on the sharing of information between *all* team members - not just the ones you like or work next to.

Improved communications technology, electronic mail and voice mail make staying connected easier and quicker.

To make e-mail and voice mail work, however, the team should agree on the ground rules for their use: how often team members will check their mailboxes, how quickly you will respond to mail, and what the format of the standard outgoing

# TEAM

*“Sam Walton, the ultimate representative of customers, encouraged his employees to ‘eliminate the dumb.’ Similarly, effective Customer Service teams are willing to admit that some practices are dumb indeed. But without this kind of collective courage, without the desire to build upon existing positives and to eliminate existing negatives, questions are not asked and so answers are not sought.”*

*Dr. Marlene Caroselli*

## E-Mail (cont'd)

voicemail message will be. Most teams agree to check their mail at (cont'd page 2) least daily and to respond within one working day.

Set up a group list so that you can write or record one message and send it to all team members at once. Be careful, however, if one of your team members or someone who needs to know is not “in the loop.”

**Electronic Mail:** Send your e-mail “to” the people who need to take action, and “copy to” those who only need to know. On the subject line, clearly state the purpose of the message (status of xyz project, my discussion with M. Mouse, new information on abc).

If any actions are required, write them at the beginning of the message, along with the date it should be completed.



Then write the detail of the message. Please DON'T SHOUT IN CAPITAL LETTERS - it's tough to read!

**Voice mail:** Think about what you want to say and note a few important points you want to cover. When you record your team message, tell them who the message is being sent to (all team members), the purpose of the message, any actions that need to be taken and by when. Then you can go into the detail of the message, making sure you cover the important points.

The key: speak clearly and concisely. Don't babble or repeat yourself.

On your outgoing message, always provide a way you can be reached, when you will return to the office, or the ability to access a “live body.” When used correctly, e-mail and voice mail can save you precious team meeting time otherwise spent in bringing everyone up to speed.

## Customer Service Teams (cont'd)

**Processes:** What are the major processes in which we engage as customer service representatives? Could they be eliminated/combined/streamlined? In the customer's eyes, which processes add the most value?

**Policies:** What Customer Service policies are outdated? Which represent obstacles to efficient work? What policies need to be created/updated to meet changing demographics? What policies or groundrules should govern the way our teams operates? What is our organization's policy regarding customers? Regarding Customer Service representative? toward outstanding customer service? For outstanding (extremely loyal) customer?

**Philosophy:** What drives the current philosophy? Does the unwritten philosophy parallel the written philosophy? What aspects of the culture reflect the organizational philosophy?

**Pioneering:** In what ways has our organization pioneered? How have customers responded to our pioneering efforts? Were those efforts prompted by customer input? What could our team do that has not been done before?

**Perfection:** If we were able to create the perfect customer service team, what would it be like? the perfect customer? The perfect product? The perfect organization? If our teams were in charge of the organization, what would be different?

The effective Customer Service team is not afraid to ask questions. Nor are they afraid to hear the answers. The resulting self-scrutiny invariably leads to service-improvement. And the desire for improvement is what propels effective

# TEAM

A newsletter designed to facilitate discussion and share tips and techniques to improve the way your teams work.

Winter 1997  
Vol. 2 No.2

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"The process you brought and the techniques you used to work us through the strategic planning process were just excellent. We accomplished a lot in a short amount of time....As you know, I've been through this process many times. I believe this was one of the best ever. "

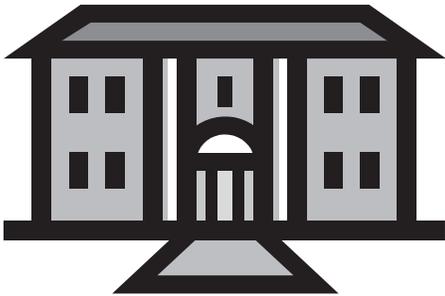
Monte Alkire  
Caterpillar, Inc.

# TEAM

## What's New at QPC Inc.

Well, we have finally done it! I just signed a real estate contract to own our very own office and meeting center at 48 Queensway Mall in Downtown Hampton, Virginia.

After years of threatening to move out of my home office, I spied a truly wonderful old bank building that was literally moved from one location into the quaint downtown Hampton area. Right off Interstate 64, it's nestled near the renowned Virginia Air and Space Museum, the Radisson Hotel and a host



of shops and eateries.

So it's in a great location, but needs a heavy dose of renovation - but that just means that we have the fun to create something new and unique to the Hampton Roads area!

What I envision is a high-tech and high touch meeting space where my clients can meet comfortably and accomplish great things. The furnishings will be elegant, yet cozy, The technology will be there to assist when needed. Coffee, tea and soda will be complimentary. Meals and snacks will be exquisitely catered to meet our clients' needs.

My office will be upstairs in an executive suite setting with three other professionals (know of anyone looking for office suite space?). We will share the copier, fax, receptionist, etc. and have first come, first serve to the small conference room on the

## Upcoming Seminars

**Mar 12** Clemson's Professional Development for Women Conference at Norfolk Waterside Marriott, VA

**May 29** Quality Awareness at Naval Base, Norfolk, VA

**June 25-6** Facilitation Skills in Hampton, VA

**July 23-4** Exercising Influence in Hampton, VA

**Sept** Advanced Facilitation Skills in Hampton, VA

**Oct 14-5** Exercising Influence in Richmond, VA



**Please call for more details**

lower level.

Needless to say, we're pretty jazzed about the whole thing. Stay tuned for more details.... Kristin

## Practical Team Activities: A Quick Vote

### A Quick Vote

*A variation of a rank order vote - a method to vote a list into a prioritized list*

**Time - 10 minutes**

**Any Number of Participants**

**Materials Required:**

- A Brainstormed List
- Three different-colored Post-it®

After brainstorming a list, ensure that the team members understand what each item means. Combine like items if necessary.

Then give each participant three tape flags - each a different color. For example, give each participant a blue, green and red tape flag. (Note, you may

want to plan for this activity, and stick the three tape flags to each name tent). Explain to the participants that they can vote on the top three items off the brainstorm list. Give the priority of the tape flag - Blue is your first choice, green is your second choice, and red is your third choice. Encourage them to write #1, #2, and #3 on the tape flags, just to make sure they don't get confused.

Ask the participants to silently note how they will vote. Then demonstrate how they should vote - by coming up to the flipchart and placing the tape flags in a line next to the brainstormed item.

After all have voted, you now have a brilliant display -

typically the "top vote-getter" will pop right out. If there appears to be a tie, the team can easily see how many voted that particular item as #1, #2, or #3 - or - a weighted vote can be tallied. Compare the number of people who voted for the item (the number of tape flags) versus the weighted vote (the importance each participant placed on that item).

Note: When counting a weighted vote, the #1 item gets three votes, the #2 item gets 2 votes, and the #3 item



"The change problem inside organizations would become less worrisome if the business environment would soon stabilize or at least slow down. But most credible evidence suggests the opposite: that the rate of environmental movement will increase and that the pressures on organizations to transform themselves will grow over the next few decades."

John P. Kotter  
Leading Change



## From the Bookshelf

In **Leading Change**, John P. Kotter shares his view of change in more than a hundred companies. He maintains that there are eight common errors in leading change:

- ① Allowing too much complacency among fellow managers and employees.
- ② Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition to overcome the firm's inertia.
- ③ Underestimating the power of vision to inspire large numbers of people.
- ④ Undercommunicating the vision by a factor of 10 (or 100 or even 1,000).
- ⑤ Permitting obstacles (such as the company's structure) to block the vision.
- ⑥ Failing to create short term wins that create momentum & widespread support.
- ⑦ Declaring victory too soon, before the original goals are completely met.
- ⑧ Neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture.

These errors are not inevitable. With awareness and skill, they can be avoided. This book provides a framework to understanding why organizations resist needed change, what exactly is the multistage process that can overcome destructive inertia, and, most of all, how the leadership that is required to drive that process in a socially healthy way, means more than good management.

## Visuals Keep Focus

Want your teams to stay focused? Capture and post key information on the wall - on flipchart paper, whiteboard or the blackboard. Your team members will stay focused and on track as well as remember and act on the information well after the meeting.

Some kinds of information you might post include:

**Meeting Purpose** - the mission, goal or objective of the meeting

**Agenda** - the chronological sequence of events or list of items to be discussed in the meeting. Include who will lead the discussion and the timeframes.

**Ground Rules** - agreed on team norms that guide the effective functioning of the team (e.g. honor time limits, don't interrupt...)

**Team Map** - this could be a timeline, schedule, flow of events, project plan or process map.

**Parking Lot** - make post-it notes available to your team members to "park" items that need to be discussed or done in the future or a comment to the group without taking up valuable airtime.

**Action Plans** - all teams should have an action plan chart where tasks and deadlines are noted and assigned.

Capture information while the team is talking to ensure understanding and clarity around what has been said. For instance, if an issue was broken down into four parts, capture those four parts on an overhead transparency (more than fifteen people) or a flipchart (less than twenty people) or on a blackboard (small classroom). This serves as a reminder of what has already been said and agreed upon.

Summarize your meeting by looking and commenting on all the work posted on the walls.

## From Chariots to Railroads

The US Standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet, 8.5 inches. That's an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used? Because that's the way they built them in England, and the US railroads were built by English expatriates.

Why did the English people build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad trams, and that's the gauge they used.

Why did "they" use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing.

Okay! Why did the wagons use that odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing the wagons would break on some of the old, long distance roads, because that's the spacing of the old wheel ruts.

So who built these old rutted roads? The first long distance roads in Europe were built by Imperial Rome for the benefit of their legions. The roads have been used ever since. And the ruts? The initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagons, were first made by Roman war chariots. Since the chariots were made by Imperial Rome, they all had the same wheel spacing.

Thus we have the answer to the original question. The US standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8.5 inches derives from the original specification for an Imperial Roman army war chariot. Specs and Bureaucracies live forever!

