

CITY OF BRANSON, MISSOURI VALUES

Established May 1998

**A Customer Service/Employee Excellence Program
for the Employees of the City of Branson**

“WHERE VALUES ARE THE DIFFERENCE”

The City of Branson Customer Service Program is diversified in that it contains elements that build upon one another to create an environment that underlines the importance of excellent service to all customers and builds teamwork throughout all levels of City government. In addition, and perhaps the most important element, is the provision within the program for reinforcement and commitment; that on-going momentum to keep customer service and team relationships at the forefront of all we do as employees.

Background

In August 1997, a customer service committee was established with the goal of reshaping customer service relations and service using the intrinsic principles necessary to become effective professionals and citizens.

The structure of the customer service committee represented a cross section of City departments and position levels in order to solicit input from every segment of the organization.

Defining exactly “who is the customer” became a first priority for the committee, for out of that definition would come the type and structure of training programs. It was fully established that the customer is “all of

us.” The customer is: our residents, business community, visitors, City employees, elected officials, and City administration.

The fact that every City employee is a public servant, then, becomes paramount in the philosophy that true customer service is really about how we interact with one another, how we accommodate one another’s needs, and how we treat each other. The issue, once defined, became a combination of internal customer service, that interaction and teamwork within City staff; and external customer service where we as public servants fulfill our role of serving the needs of the public.

External and internal factors were considered as the committee studied the history and pulse of the community.

Community Growth/Diversity

The City of Branson grew in phenomenal proportions in the early to mid 1990's. With that growth came a large change in diversity. Suddenly, there was a mass infusion of people who didn't grow up in the Ozarks. Transplanted citizens, with varied experiences, joined the mix of locals who had a very defined way of doing business. Local government was expected to bridge the chasm created by this unique blend of “Bransonites.”

During that same period the City organization was growing at an equal rate, which created an ever-increasing need for stability and team building within our own ranks, as well as the demand for structured training to meet the needs of the public. Customer service was a necessity on both ends of the spectrum.

Trust in Government

An obvious trend has been taking place across the country: a steady loss of trust in all levels of government. Certainly, Branson has not escaped this trend, and as the community continues to grow and diversify, the need to instill trust back into government grows exponentially.

Instilling that trust is the basis of this program. Honesty, openness and fairness are what all people desire and expect. These three timeless principles create the integrity that people have a right to expect in their government. Too often, we forget that it is *their* government, created to serve them, not us.

Great strides were made between in 1997 and 1998 in developing new trust between our external customers and the city organization. Likewise, a new trust has developed internally. This has been achieved through open communication, good work habits and a willingness to solicit participation.

Our City cannot isolate itself from the customers we serve. We must value the differences within our community, seek input from every quarter of our community and solve problems together. This customer service program strengthens our resolve and ability to continue an open, honest government organization.

Cost

Much of the internal program commitment is based on various incentives and rewards to reinforce good work habits and teamwork. Our values and work ethics are in direct proportion to the success of our organization in customer relations. Because of this, incentives are a necessary element. It tells employees that the city is committed to customer service and has the desire to participate with employees. Costs involve actual cash incentives, purchases of certain materials and paid days off.

Summary

A well-defined customer service program first identifies all participants and then desired results – the end in mind. This program is centered on principle-based values of honesty, trust and fairness. The next step was establishing an organization mission statement, which embraces our values and the intent of the community mission statement. The mission statement is our vision, what we want our organization to become at some point in the future. All goals and objectives, all customer service training, is directly driven by our values and mission statement.

Our values program and mission statement development requires direct participation from the entire organization in a team-building concept. To reinforce this concept and to commit personnel to on-going maintenance of values and good work habits, we have incorporated incentives into the program. These are a necessary element in the success of the program.

Customer service training for all employees is an important part of this program's success and various types of training programs will be made available. The initial internal customer service training has been the "Seven Habits for Highly Effective People" workshops. To insure that the training is ongoing for new employees as they come on board, the City paid for one of our directors to become a certified trainer. Other formal programs are periodically reviewed and filtered into the organization if found to be worthy. Various programs on VHS and DVD are also available for training.

The final element is to evaluate the program to see how we are doing with our customers, internally and externally.

II. BRANSON VALUES

The values were established first by input from the employees. All were asked what they thought the word “values” included. Using that list, a consultant assisted the Customer Service Committee in establishing the values. Those values were reviewed and revisions made by City Administration and the Directors, then approved by the Governing Body.

CITY OF BRANSON ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

The City believes that all Employees should work together as a team to give excellent service to the citizens and businesses of our community, to our visitors, to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen, and to each other. All behavior and our organizational culture is based on a set of common values. Those common values are as follows:

“BRANSON – Where Values are the Difference”

- **B**etter government through open communications.
- **R**esponsible stewardship of City resources.
- **A** firm commitment to honesty, integrity, and fairness.
- **N**ature and its preservation for enjoyment for all.
- **S**triving for continuous improvement of services.
- **O**rganization built on teamwork.
- **N**oted for serving customers with excellence and professionalism.

III. MISSION STATEMENT

The community of Branson established a Mission Statement in July 1993, which was developed as a community project, by citizens, business owners, residents, and city employees. This Community Mission Statement is as follows:

The City will encourage the quality growth of a healthy, wholesome, clean environment in which people live, work and visit.”

Now, the employees were asked to participate in the search for an organizational Mission Statement for the City employees. The Mission Statement was to be based on the “Branson Values” which have been adopted by the Board of Aldermen. It is to be our vision of what our organization is to become, and all of our future goals, objectives, and training are to be directed by our Mission Statement.

All full-time City employees participated in the contest. Employee’s names were randomly drawn to form 5-person teams. This concept provided a cross section of employee representation on each team to jointly create for submission, an employee “Mission Statement.” The teams were allowed to submit more than one entry. Time was scheduled so that groups could meet to work on their entry during working hours.

Each Team submitted their entry, in a sealed envelope, clearly marked “Mission Statement” to the Chair of the Customer Service Committee. The sealed envelopes were then forwarded to an outside consultant, who gave each entry a number. The Customer Service Committee selected the top 5 entries, which were submitted to the City Administrator, by number only (team participants were not known by anyone but the outside consultant until the winning number was selected. In case of identical entries, the City Administrator would have determined the procedure to determine a winner.

These were the guidelines for developing a Mission Statement:

It should describe our commitment to customer service

It should embrace the Community Mission Statement

It should be based on the “Branson Values” we have adopted

It should adequately address service

It should be 25 words or less, and typed.

The winning Mission Statement was selected and the winning team received a cash award of \$250, which was divided among each member, plus recognition for his or her team effort to create the winning employee’s mission statement. The winning team was comprised of: Mike Martin and Brad Meadows, Public Works; Loretta McCullough, Police; and Angelo Ribando, Planning/Development. The mission statement is as follows:

CITY OF BRANSON MISSION STATEMENT

The City of Branson is committed to its citizens and to those who visit here, to ensure a safe and environmentally sound community. We will work as a team to maintain and promote the growth of our city, and to provide professional, courteous service to all through fair and open communication. We look to tomorrow, remembering yesterday, dedicated to excellence today.

IV. INCENTIVES

Values Kick-off Event

The values program was presented during a Kick-off event, lasting approximately one hour in the council chambers at City Hall. It was presented at three different scheduled times so that all employees had the opportunity to participate. The programs were presented by the City Administrator.

Each employee received a special invitation attached to his or her paychecks of the upcoming meeting. The employee newsletter carried various news articles on the “Branson Values” campaign. Flyers and posters were posted throughout the various City facilities prior to the meeting, defining the “Branson Values.” Pins and coffee mugs were presented to all the employees to celebrate the values kick-off event. Employees also received laminated cards containing the new logo, values and mission statement.

Know Your Values Promotion

If the employees are to embrace the “Branson Values” into their daily work lives, they must know the values and remember them. To reinforce the “Branson Values,” the City Administrator, Assistant City Administrator and the Department Directors occasionally, at random, ask an employee to recite the “Branson Values.” If the employee is successful, they are awarded a certificate and ½ day off with pay. Successful employees will also be entered into a drawing that month and one is selected as the Values Employee of the Month. That employee is awarded dinner for two.

Values Button Day Promotion

In order to enhance our efforts to continually promote our values to the public and to encourage the wearing of the values pin distributed to all employees at the kick-off meeting and future new hires, one name will be picked at random each week from each department. If those employees are wearing their pin, they will be entered into a monthly drawing for ½ day off with pay. Employees are only eligible to win the monthly drawing one time, but remain in the main pool of employees until they are drawn as a monthly winner.

Valued Employee Birthday Cards

All employees receive birthday cards individually signed by the Administrator, Asst. Administrator and HR Director that thank them for being valued employees of the City.

Values Breakfast

Every year, the Branson Values Committee cooks and serves breakfast to the employees as a thank you for all that they do. The committee always tries to have fun with this project, sometimes dressing in pajamas and other times as one of the values. The employees all enjoy this event and appreciate the effort we put forth.

Caught You Living the Branson Values Promotion

In 2006, we launched a new employee recognition promotion, called “Caught You Living the Branson Values.” Forms and flyers were designed and distributed to all departments. The concept is that employees and citizens can fill out the simple form when they see an employee living the Branson Values. Recognition is given to the employee within his department and copies are forwarded to HR and Administration. It has been a very positive program because it encourages our employees to look around and acknowledge the good values they see in others, and it helps the recipients to remember that they are an important member of the team and that someone else noticed.

Postcards with department specific pictures and note cards were printed up and distributed to Directors and Supervisors so that they could quickly give recognition to employees when they see them living the values. Various promotional items were purchased with the Values or the Values statement printed on them. We distribute those items on a sporadic basis so that our employees always have a reminder around them of the values.

This promotion is designed to give recognition and positive feedback to our employees and to keep the values in the forefront of their minds. This promotion has been very successful.

Values Promotion Budget

Costs associated with the “Branson Values” program are reviewed annually and included in the HR Department budget.

V. REINFORCEMENT AND COMMITMENT

A positive reinforcement and commitment campaign is an important factor in making the Values Program a success. The mission statement and values must be visibly apparent and projected for the entire workforce throughout each City of Branson workplace. There are many avenues available for promoting the values. Contests, rewards, and recognition will be planned to show our commitment to excellent customer service.

Our values must become an integral part of every piece of the personnel picture. They are incorporated into the handbook, they are considered whenever a policy or procedure is implemented, they are an integral part of our recruitment and interview process, and they are reflected in our forms and in communication with our employees. The values program naturally goes along with the Covey philosophy we have integrated into our organization. Together, they are the core of our future direction.

Another essential step in this process will be utilizing cross-departmental work groups to review and revise processes currently in place to make them more customer friendly. An example would be the licensing process to provide for “one-stop shopping.” The work groups will reinforce the customer service concept and integrate the team concept into the employee’s everyday jobs.

At some point in the future, we may also pursue an outbound program of citizen involvement. Citizens (customers) who understand and participate in their governments achieve an “ownership” status and can be a part of the solutions to problems that confront us. Ideas include a speaker’s bureau (already in place), open houses to let the citizens know what each department does, positive press for City accomplishments, and a committee of citizens and governmental employees to decide what actions need to be taken to increase citizen involvement and positive customer service.