

A Look Inside

information and that made people feel disconcerted.”

Moving forward, the challenge became one of identifying future issues and addressing them *before* they mushroomed into full-blown problems. With this logic in mind, the company began investing considerable time, talents, and money on surveys and opinion polls, beginning in 1981, to find out what customers want from their utility. “The difference is that before, we provided customers with what we thought they wanted,” explained Becky Merritt, director of Customer Service Centers and a 31-year employee. “Today, we are more interested in asking them what *they* want. And we not only have to be willing to hear what they say, but we need to respond one way or another.”

The definition of excellent customer service varies from one day to the next, and it’s not something that only one department delivers. Rather, there is an emphasis on providing each customer with the *W.O.W. factor*, providing *What’s needed, On time, and With value*. For example, the Call Center might receive calls from customers speaking up to 17 different languages in any given month. To decrease the duration of the phone call, the company implemented a translation service available around-the-clock for non-English speaking customers. “We want to provide elite end-to-end service, which means we have to coordinate our problem-solving with other departments in the company,” said Merritt. “But it’s a race, a continual process, because as fast as our society moves, what we are delivering today to satisfy the customer can be totally different from what will satisfy them tomorrow.”

Technology has revolutionized customer service. With 2.4 million residences and businesses to serve electrically, the days of one-on-one contact with each customer for each issue are over. Still, Dominion



THEN

As recorded in *The Vepcovian* in April 1943: “All outside lines are busy! And so were all the lines coming in during the sleet storm, when operators ate their meals at the switchboard and some slept at the Exchange during the night so as to be on the job late and early.” Shown (left to right) were Misses Hopkins, Berry, and Mariner, operators on the Richmond switchboard.

ion has implemented several options that provide customers with direct, immediate service. In 2009, more than two million transactions occurred via the Internet; most dealt with billing and payments, service requests, and outage reports. The telephone continues to be the medium of choice for customers, and with several self-serve options, 30 percent of the seven million calls received annually are addressed immediately by automated means. Mail, fax, and e-mail are additional ways customers can communicate with the company.

Because so many issues have the potential to hamper customer relations, Dominion is ever mindful that keeping customers happy is key to the company’s success. “We look out for customers like



NOW

In 2009, customer service focuses on “first call resolution.” Rather than taking as many calls as possible during their shifts, representatives try to resolve each issue on the first call. Individual calls may run longer than expected, but customers are spared the inconvenience of multiple calls. Shown is Shawnda Toler, a training assessment and performance coach in Richmond.

a lifelong friend,” claims the 2008 Annual Report. “Dependable service is a given. Helpful programs to manage energy use and costs are at the ready, as are smiling faces or friendly voices on the phone.”

SHAREHOLDERS: “DOMINION’S ULTIMATE OWNERS”

Maintaining relationships with existing investors, cultivating new investors, “talking up” Dominion at public functions and industry conferences, hosting investor meetings and earnings calls — it’s all part of the job for Dominion’s Investor Relations (IR) team.

Investors, both individuals and institutions, have long been an important part of Dominion. Nurturing the relationship in a formal manner,

Dominion’s First Century: A Legacy of Service

Every picture tells a story. “Then and Now” pictures with meaty captions move the story forward.

In Dominion’s centennial book we included several such pairs, such as this twosome from 1943 and 2009. Both images reflect a dedication to customer service. The wartime operators worked around the clock during a sleet storm. (We learned this from the employee newsletter where we found the photo.) The contemporary worker, a performance coach, trains representatives in the art of “first call resolution,” which spares customers the inconvenience of multiple calls.

In a few years today’s headsets and computers may look as antiquated as old plug-in switchboards . . . but that’s part of the visual fun of history.



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