

The Customer Satisfaction Survey for Self Evaluation

Mary L. Reese

PREFACE

The Prince George's Voluntary Action Center, Inc. stands on the brink of significant growth and change in the ways it does the business of promoting volunteerism and recruiting and referring new volunteers to its client agencies and organizations. In 1992, the Volunteer Center was awarded a computer system and equipment grant from IBM and United Way of America and was designated by the Points of Light Foundation as a Network County Grantee.

Therefore, it was crucial to determine base line information about current service delivery system as a benchmark for the anticipated "growth spurt" these grants generate. As a participant in the Drucker Foundation Series of National Telecommunication Conferences, the Center took the initiative in implementing the Drucker Foundation Self-Assessment Tool to develop and produce its first customer satisfaction survey and results.

INTRODUCTION

Prince George's Voluntary Action Center (PGVAC) promotes and generates volunteerism by recruiting and referring people to private, non-profit, and public agencies in Prince George's County. As the Center celebrates its tenth anniversary, it is interesting to note the many changes that have occurred. Founded and operated by volunteers for the agency's first three

years, the Center has grown to four paid staff members and numerous administrative and office volunteers. The Center is now in the process of becoming fully automated. Automation will allow matching potential volunteers with available volunteer agencies by computerization. The computerization will allow more referrals to be made than in previous years.

The 1990-91 annual report for the Center indicates that 3232 persons received volunteer information from PGVAC. The number of volunteers referred was 2337 for that time period. These statistics indicate the quantity, but not necessarily the quality of services. Information on the Center's current functioning was necessary to effectively cope with the dramatic increase of volunteers and general volunteer information provided. The information was also crucial as the Center moved into full automation through Project IMPACT, a grant from the United Way and IBM Corporation. Baseline information on how the Center could determine quality of service was needed to continue into its next decade of service.

An outline addressing certain issues was drawn with reference to a preliminary draft of a self-assessment tool developed by the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management. These issues include the mission of the Center, the population it serves, how it serves and how an evaluation of the service is done (see Ap-

Mary L. Reese celebrates 50 years as a volunteer and 20 years as a professional volunteer manager. As Executive Director of the Prince George's Voluntary Action Center, Inc. since 1986 she has become a noted trainer, author and speaker. At the request of the Prince George's Community College in 1991, the Voluntary Action Center assisted in the development of the "Volunteer Program Manager" Letter of Recognition curriculum of the Business Institute. Under Ms. Reese's leadership the PGVAC has received a number of grants including the 1992 Points of Light Network Leadership Grant and the IBM and United Way of America's Project IMPACT computer equipment grant. Ms. Reese was one of 14 honored by the Washingtonian magazine's 1992 Washingtonian of the Year.

pendix A). The result was the *Customer Satisfaction Survey*. The survey allowed the Center to examine how satisfied potential volunteers, or customers, were when they contacted the Center for available volunteer positions. The survey addresses relevant factors of quality customer service, including accurate information given to the customer, courtesy of the staff, interests of the customer considered in the referral, and fulfilled customer expectations. The design of the survey instrument, the sample used, and results of the survey are discussed in this report.

DESIGN OF THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

In consideration of time constraints of the respondents, the questions in the survey were brief. Each question directly addressed the issues targeted for study through the survey. The result was a one-page survey consisting of nine questions. Each question could be answered with a one-word response (see Appendix B).

The survey was divided into two sections. The first section consisted of four questions to be answered on a scale basis, with one being the lowest score possible and four being the highest score possible. The first set of questions addressed the volunteer Center and referred to the call or visit the customer made to the Center in an attempt to receive a referral. The second section consisted of five questions which addressed the agency given in the referral.

The survey was conducted over the phone with the belief that a better response rate would be obtained than from a mail-out survey. In addition, a letter was sent to each individual in the sample approximately one week to ten days prior to the phone call to notify them of the survey and its purpose. The survey was conducted in late spring 1992 (see Appendix C).

THE SAMPLE

The sample used for the survey was a random selection of intakes for the last quarter of 1991, October, November, and

December. Intakes are records of those individuals who contacted the Center and the referrals given to those individuals. Thirty percent of the intakes for the three months were selected on a random basis with no preference or knowledge of race, age, gender, or the status of the referral, that is, whether or not they were placed in volunteer positions. The last quarter of 1991 was chosen because those individuals had enough time to contact the agency given in the referral and possibly have placement in a volunteer position. In order to have a representative sample, yet one that was manageable, 30% of the intakes were selected, providing a sample of 96 customers.

Each month's sample was conducted separately in terms of when the letter was sent and when the customer was contacted by phone. This procedure allowed for a manageable time frame in which to conduct the survey. For example, in March, 1992, the October sample was sent the letter and then surveyed approximately one week later. As contacts for this month were completed, the letter was sent out for the next month. This process was repeated until all three months were completed, taking 12 weeks to accomplish. However, the results of all three months were combined and evaluated with no differentiation.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

The response rate was 44%. This allowed for enough completed surveys to provide an accurate reflection of the level of satisfaction customers have with the Center. Some interesting and positive results were that for the first set of questions the Center received an overall 70% response for the highest score possible on the scale. The highest percentage was 82% response for the highest score possible on the question addressing the courtesy of the staff members.

VAC SET QUESTIONS

The first four questions of the survey, the VAC set, addressed the contact the in-

dividual made with the Volunteer Center. This contact generally involved an expressed interest in volunteering and a request for referrals to agencies which offered volunteer positions. Each of the questions in this section were asked on a scale of one to four, with four being the highest score possible.

Question 1

The first question in the VAC set asked if the interest of the individual was considered for the referral given. For example, if the customer expressed a desire to work with children but was given a referral to a nursing home, clearly the interest was not considered. The interest of the individual is a key factor in referring him or her to a satisfactory volunteer position and therefore influences their opinion on the level of satisfaction they have with the Center. For this question, 72.5% of the respondents gave the highest score possible. The response to Question 1 can be found in Figure 1.

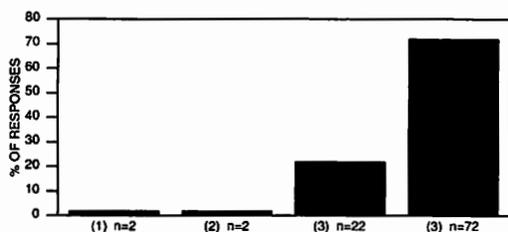


Figure 1

**Response to VAC Set, Question 1,
"Were you satisfied that your interests
were considered for referral?"**

Question 2

Question 2 asked respondents if the staff member was courteous and helpful. This question examined the basis of any good customer service, which is courtesy to the customer and a willingness to do what the customer expects, at least in the capacity the staff member is able. For this question, 82% of the respondents gave the highest score possible. The response to Question 2 can be found in Figure 2.

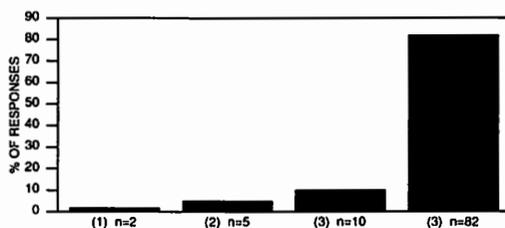


Figure 2

**Response to VAC Set, Question 2,
"Was the staff member courteous
and willing to help?"**

Question 3

Question 3 addressed accurate information as a key factor in the service a customer receives and how the customer judges that service. The third question in this section examined whether accurate information was given in terms of contacts and telephone numbers. For this question, 77 of the respondents gave the highest score possible. Response to Question 3 can be found in Figure 3.

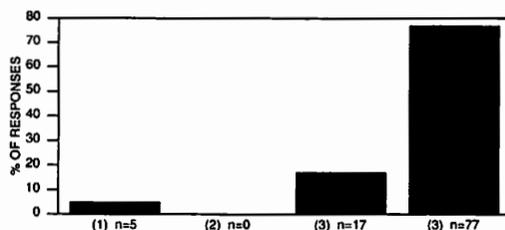


Figure 3

**Response to VAC Set, Question 3,
"Did the staff member provide you
with accurate information?"**

Question 4

Finally, Question 4 asked if the referral matched what the volunteer intended to do. This question parallels the first but addresses what the customer expected to do, such as tasks or jobs. For example, if an individual was interested in "hands on" volunteer work with HIV babies, doing clerical work in a hospital that treated these babies may not necessarily match what the customer desires to do. For this question, 80% of the respondents gave the highest score possible. The responses for Question 4 can be found in Figure 4.

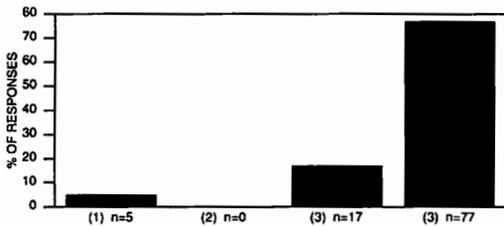


Figure 4

Response to VAC Set, Question 4, "Were you satisfied your referral matched what you intended to do?"

AGENCY SET QUESTIONS

The second set of questions, the Agency Set, focused on the agency to which the customer was referred and possibly placed. The questions focus on reception and processing of the potential volunteer toward volunteer placement within the agency. Success or failure to achieve a satisfactory volunteer job match are addressed in this set of questions. Of 42 respondents, 25 did not go on to volunteer.

Percentages for these questions were calculated based on how many individuals actually responded to the questions rather than the total number of respondents in the sample. This calculation better reflects the actual percentage because all respondents were not in the position to answer all questions in the agency set. Some questions in this set were applicable only if the individual made contact with the agency and some only if the individual volunteered. Therefore, the percentage for all questions is not based on the same amount of respondents. For example, the first question was answered by more individuals than the remaining questions in the set. More individuals contacted the referral agencies than went on to volunteer. Some reasons for the failure to achieve a volunteer match are discussed in the next section.

Question 1

Question 1 for the Agency Set asked if the customer's volunteer request was handled efficiently. Customers are giving of themselves and their time when they volunteer. A high level of satisfaction results

when the agency processes the potential volunteer quickly. One respondent indicated that after several attempts at contacting the agency and still not being placed, she was no longer interested in volunteering. The respondents of this survey indicated that they expected rapid processing. Responses to Question 1 can be found in Figure 5.



Figure 5

Response to Agency Set, Question 1, "Did the agency process your volunteer request efficiently?"

Question 2

Question 2 asked respondents if they were given tasks in accordance with their interests. The question follows through on the intentions of the first question on the VAC Set. Because the referrals are given based on the stated interests of the potential volunteer, it is important that these interests are considered when the volunteer is being placed by the agency. The responses to Question 2 can be found in Figure 6.

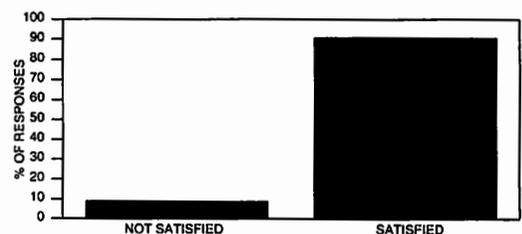


Figure 6

Response to Agency Set, Question 2, "Were you given tasks in accordance with your intended interests?"

Question 3

Question 3 asked if the customer was trained for the position. It is understood

that some positions do not require formal training. Therefore, a not applicable response was available for this question. However, if training is necessary for the position, it is important that the agency provide it so that the volunteer may perform well and responsibly in the position.

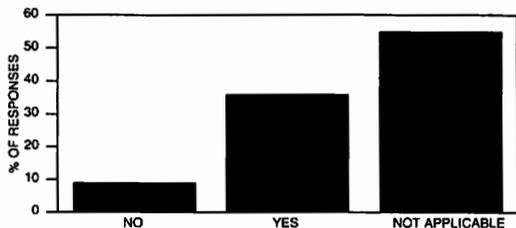


Figure 7

Response to Agency Set, Question 3, "Did the agency train you for your volunteer position?"

Question 4

Question 4 asked customers if they received a level of support sufficient enough to fulfill their duties. The level of support refers not only to supervisory support but assistance from other staff members when and if necessary. Responses to this question can be found in Figure 8.



Figure 8

Response to Agency Set, Question 4, "Were you offered a level of support sufficient to fulfill your duties?"

Question 5

Finally, Question 5 asked if the customer gained a rewarding volunteer experience. This question is basically a culmination of the other questions in this set. Each question in the set plays an important role in whether the customer gained a positive experience and therefore high level of satisfaction both with the Center and with the

agency that provided the volunteer experience. Responses to Question 5 can be found in Figure 9.

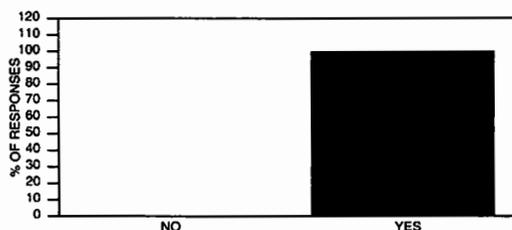


Figure 9

Response to Agency Set, Question 5, "Do you feel you gained a rewarding volunteer experience?"

CONCLUSION

The Customer Satisfaction Survey was conducted to assess customer satisfaction with the Volunteer Center. Satisfaction was determined by (1) information consistent with the interest of the customer; (2) courtesy of the staff member doing the intake; (3) the accuracy of information given; and (4) the information given about volunteering matched the prospective volunteer's needs. The findings revealed the Center received a 70% highest response possible for each of the questions addressing these issues. Therefore, the respondents rated the Center better than average on customer service based on these criteria.

While the survey was being conducted, other issues surfaced. For example, many individuals confused the Center with the agency to which they were referred and thought of the Center as part of the referral agency. This sometimes led customers to associate the Center with a bad experience if they felt their interest was not handled efficiently and effectively by the referral agency they contacted. The survey revealed several responses indicating such a connection. To improve the image of the Center in terms of customer satisfaction, this is an area that should be addressed. The agencies need to be informed of this issue, not only in terms of customer satisfaction but in an effort to recruit and retain future volunteers. A bad experience by

even one potential volunteer could be detrimental to that agency's public image, as well as its volunteer program.

The reasons given by individuals in the sample for not volunteering are issues which need to be addressed by the Center and the agencies. While not all of the 42 respondents volunteered, 67% indicated that they did have a positive experience with the contact they had with the agency. Many did not volunteer due to their own personal reasons, such as transportation. Still, 29% of the unsatisfactory responses were directly related to the agency. The reasons given for not volunteering, including those directly related to the agency, can be found in Table I.

Table I
Reasons for Not Volunteering

Reason	Percentage*
Scheduling of time constraints	38%
Transportation difficulties	4%
Personal problems	2%
Training not provided, but needed	4%
No real position existed	7%
Request not processed efficiently	9%
Position did not match interest	9%

*Total does not equal 100% because of multiple responses.

As mentioned, fewer individuals actually went on to volunteer with an agency than contacted the agency. If the reason is directly related to the agency, the loss of the volunteer needs to be addressed by the agency. One respondent indicated that his failure to volunteer resulted because the agency had no real position for him. He contacted the agency, was processed quickly, but to his surprise and disappointment the agency did not know exactly why they needed him.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the survey revealed the Center does an above average job in customer satisfaction. The staff members are courteous and willing to help and offer ac-

curate information. One individual in the survey responded that an incorrect phone number had been given because the number to the agency had recently changed and the Center was not aware of it. However, to the customer's surprise and delight the staff member called him back the same day to notify him of the mistake and give him correct information.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Examination of the survey results provide specific areas of concern to be addressed by both volunteer centers and agencies to increase customer satisfaction and volunteer recruitment and retention.

An issue raised by the survey was concern about the center/client agency identification confusion and therefore the association individuals tended to have with the volunteer centers and the agencies to which they were referred. This association is not desirable if the customer has a bad volunteer experience. It is recommended that the center's staff member briefly describe the mission of the center before offering referrals. This clarifies the information resource clearinghouse/client agency relationship.

It is further recommended that volunteer referral centers continue to educate the client agencies and share with them the information learned from the survey, particularly in future training for volunteer program managers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author extends her appreciation to Sandra Broadwater for her outstanding development and execution of the Customer Satisfaction Survey. Ms. Broadwater was selected as one of the first service leaders for the VOLUNTEER MARYLAND! project of the State of Maryland's 1992 National and Community Service federal grant.

APPENDIX A
Drucker Foundation Self-Assessment Tool Outline

- A. 1. What is our business (mission)?
2. Who is our customer(s)?
3. What does the customer consider value? *What?*
4. What are *our* values?
5. What are we doing *now*?
- B. 1. How do we evaluate our work? Against what standards?
2. How well are we using our resources—our staff, our volunteers, as well as our money?
3. What do we mean by results? *How* are we doing?
4. What have been the results?
- C. 1. *What* are we measuring?
2. By what means are we measuring our results?
3. What other information is needed? *How* do we know that?
- D. 1. What is the *desired outcome*?
2. *What* is our plan *to achieve* these results?
3. What, if anything, should we do?
• Remain the same? Why? *What's next?*
4. • Abandon programs? What? Why?
• Address Later? Why?
• Contract out? Why? Where?
- E. 1. Determine Roles/Accountabilities/Timetables/Evaluations
2. Determine Resources Needed
3. Record Session *Action taken*
4. Report Findings
5. Follow-up

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APPENDIX B
Customer Satisfaction Survey

On a scale of 1 to 4 with 4 being the highest, please circle client's response to each item.

VAC SET

- 1) Were you satisfied that your interests were considered for your referral?

1-----2-----3-----4
not satisfied very satisfied

- 2) Was the staff member courteous and willing to help?

1-----2-----3-----4
not courteous very courteous

- 3) Did the staff member provide you with accurate information?

1-----2-----3-----4
not accurate very accurate

- 4) Were you satisfied that your referral matched what you intended to do?

1-----2-----3-----4
not satisfied very satisfied

AGENCY SET

Name of agency in which you volunteered _____

- 1) Did the agency process your volunteer request efficiently?

_____ Yes _____ No

- 2) After you started your volunteer position, were you given tasks in accordance with your intended interests?

_____ Yes _____ No

- 3) Did the agency train you for your volunteer position?

_____ Yes _____ No

- 4) Were you offered a level of support sufficient enough to fulfill your duties?

_____ Yes _____ No

- 5) Do you feel that you gained a rewarding volunteer experience?

_____ Yes _____ No

COMMENTS:

APPENDIX C
Sample Contact Letter

Dear Friend:

As an intern with the Prince George's Voluntary Action Center, I am interested in customer satisfaction with the Center. The Volunteer Center does maintain records of people who were given referrals. However, my interest is not whether you received information, but how pleased you are with the Center.

Independent of the staff, I will be conducting a CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY. Our records indicate that you called the Center with an interest to volunteer. Therefore, within the next week, I will be contacting you by phone to ask you a few questions about your experience with the Center and the results of using the information provided by the Volunteer Center. The survey will take only a few minutes of your time, so I am hopeful that you will be able to help me.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with the survey and thank you for your interest in volunteering.

Sincerely,