



CONTENTS

GCA Customer Survey

Interview With a Mummy

Combined Fund Drive

Recognition Review

Kudos

DIRECTIONS

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Strategic Planning: It Starts Long Before Tip-off!

Scott Davies, University Real Estate and Treasury Offices

“Failure to prepare is preparing to fail.” *John Wooden*

What does a retired basketball coach have to do with Financial Management’s strategic planning efforts? Nothing, on the surface, until one evaluates this man’s principles—considered by many to be the underlying reason for UCLA winning ten NCAA basketball championships over twelve seasons. Every year during his coaching career, John Wooden preached values, open communication, planning and goal setting. Financial Management has embraced a similar value system and set of standards over the past decade.



Although I’m a relative newcomer to Financial Management, it’s apparent that a division wide self-assessment period has commenced, much like that which occurs during the off-season for many sports teams. A quick review of the past decade reveals many improvements such as:

- Enhanced customer service.
- Improved communication inside and outside the organization.
- Focus on staff and leader development.

- Development of internal training classes.
- Development of a recognition program which later received a NACUBO award.
- Streamlined and documented processes.
- Application of new technology.

Those successes, along with countless other accomplishments, are even more impressive in light of the severe budget constraints and workload requirements faced during the same period:

- Accounts serviced by Grant and Contract Accounting increased 86%.
- Loans disbursed by Student Loans and Receivables increased 92%.
- Employees paid by Payroll increased 27% and invoices paid by Payables 18%.
- Treasuries’ managed investments have grown to over \$1 billion and debt financing volume exceeded \$100 million for the first time in 1999.

All of this by a team handicapped by twenty-seven fewer players and a budget cut of \$2.1M over the past decade!

... Tipoff (Cont'd)

Financial Management continues to recognize individual contributions and embrace core values that will carry the division forward into the next decade. However, the EIT understands the future success of Financial Management depends on a strategic vision with new goals, performance measurements to indicate progress towards those goals, and structured activities to reach various milestones. Even John Wooden had to reestablish his team and incorporate new game plans and strategies after each championship season!

In February, Financial Management hired Deltapoint, a national consulting firm, to steer the entire division and individual de-

“Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.”

partments in planning for improvements. Mike Bresco and Lou Usarzewicz, from Deltapoint, have been meeting with the EIT and department leaders to establish measurement tools and

baselines of workloads. Customer requirements and available resources are being reevaluated to determine the future necessary improvements and the required direction to attain those results. Over the coming months, operating plans will be developed and implemented. The results will ultimately be measured against those goals and the University's mission to provide efficient and understandable services.

Financial Management's challenge in the new millennium remains the same—delivering timely, high quality services to our customers despite increasing transaction volume and limited funding. For many problems we encounter on a daily basis, there may not be any solutions within our control. As we move along with the strategic planning process, however, we can look to that same retired basketball coach for a few additional words of wisdom: “Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.”

Many of you will be asked to participate in this process over the coming weeks. I encourage you to treat this planning process as preparation for a new season. As members of the Financial Management team, your efforts will benefit customers and staff alike.

GCA Customer Survey

*Verna Blackhurst and Tim Lavin,
Grant & Contract Accounting*

In November 1999, Grant and Contract Accounting completed its first customer service survey. The survey was distributed to one hundred fifty grant administrators on the UW campus and received seventy-five responses.

GCA's Survey Team, with the assistance of Jarrett Paschel (a Ph.D. in Sociology at the UW) constructed the survey and analyzed the results. We decided to undertake this measurement in keeping with our Strategic Plan mission, which reads in part: “We anticipate and creatively respond to the needs of our customers through collaboration and commitment to continuous improvement.” We believe that the best way to serve our customers is to ask them what they need and want.

We sought feedback on our core competencies—accuracy, timeliness, reliability and professionalism. Accuracy, timeliness and reliability were surveyed in the areas of setting up budget numbers, processing RTE's, reviewing expenditure compliance and closing budgets. Professionalism was broken down into knowledge, communication skills and perseverance/follow through.

In addition to core competencies, questions were posed concerning customer service—“Do GCA employees treat you in a courteous and respectful manner? How often have you encountered errors with GCA Services? Do you get consistent answers from GCA staff concerning policies and procedures?”

The final portion of the survey asked for feedback on specific concerns and solicited recommendations for improvements. In addition to the questions outlined above, respondents were given the opportunity to provide written comments, which elicited ninety-nine written comments.

The graph below summarizes the ratings we received on the four core competencies. Particularly gratifying was the overwhelmingly positive light in which University administrators regard GCA.

The results supply GCA with important feedback on our present performance and provide us with a road map to move forward. These scores will be used as a baseline for comparison with future surveys.

As we go forward in our strategic planning process, the results of the survey will provide GCA with information which will assist in developing strategic action plans to address the needs of our customers. It will also provide our Customer Service team valuable input when designing GCA specific customer service training.

If you would like to receive a copy of the survey please contact Tim Lavin, Grant and Contract Accounting Manager at 685-1345 or timlav@u.washington.edu.



Interview With a Mummy

Heather Norberg and Carole Breeden, Payroll

An interview with Academy Award nominee for Best Documentary, the artist known as “The Red Tape Mummy” and Directions guest reporter, Scoop Dorn from the Payroll Office.

Scoop: I just saw your film, *An Invisible Man Meets the Mummy*, what was your motivation for this character?

TRTM: Well, I went to get my driver’s license renewed, and failed to stand in the blue line with the correct colored ticket. Hours later when I finally found the correct line, the person at the desk couldn’t answer my questions, sneered at me as I asked for information and then sent me into another line. I knew then that there was a story that needed to be told.

Scoop: That sounds awful! I think all our readers can relate to wasting valuable time in lines, and poor service. But how do you expect this film to make a difference in customer service?

TRTM: When the film debuted, it was shown in a Quality Improvement Awareness Training class, at the University of Washington. The ideas discussed in this film, combined with the principles of QI, inspire employees to exceed customer’s expectations, increase their job knowledge and focus on process improvement.

Scoop: Do you have an example of how QI has been put to work? Is it in your next film?

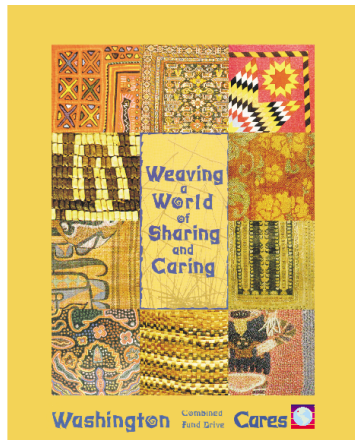
TRTM: So many departments are implementing these principles, if I put them all in my next film, it’d be longer than *Titanic*! Recently, in the Payroll Office, they’ve formed a Customer Service Training Team that is focusing on the specific needs of the Payroll department.



Combined Fund Drive

Shawna Litterski, Payroll

The Combined Fund Drive for this year has once again been extremely successful. The theme for this year's campaign was "Washington State Employees – Sharing and Caring." Financial Management employees have raised over \$21,300.00 for various needy charities. Best of all, 89% of all employees participated. This goes to prove how much we all care for others in our community!



This year's group of departmental campaign coordinators gave generously of their time & talents to create another successful campaign. The group was made up of the following people; Mirelle Aziz (Equipment Inventory), Diane Cooley (Student Accounts),

Brenda Grayson (GCA), Esther Hasan (Student Accounts), Shawna Litterski (Payroll), Brenda Pontius (Accounting Operations), Garth Reistad (Treasury), Diane Scillo (Travel), Ron Vargas (Student Loans), Marilyn Wiggins (Financial Accounting), and Shawn Williams (Payables).

To kick off the start of this year's campaign, there was a Silent Auction to benefit the CFD charities. Employees throughout Financial Management donated a variety of items. Some of the items included; picture frames, miniature doll furniture, guitar lessons, custom

made Christmas cards, lots of books and a \$10.00 bill, just to name a few! The bidding was fast and furious

especially as the deadlines approached. It was a lot of fun! This involvement helped raise an additional \$900.00 for the charities.

Most importantly, we would really like to thank all of those employees who gave items to the auction and participated in the bidding.

Financial Management has once again been recognized for our successful efforts. At the statewide thank you event, we received the award for the "Best Division (within an agency)." This is our second time winning this honor, and the plaque currently hangs on the wall in the Financial Management office.

Our own thank you event was held on February 23rd, in the Asian room of the Ethnic Cultural Center. We had a great turnout from all of the various departments. A speaker from the University Food Bank discussed the changing face of poverty, and highlighted how many of their clientele are the working poor and children. Her presentation drove home the reality of how the donations and volunteers are relied upon to assist the needy in our communities.

Once again, thank you to everyone for making this another successful campaign, we couldn't have done it without you!



"To insure that we keep this meeting under thirty minutes, I'll just set this timer."

DIRECTIONS

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For more information, please contact

Diane Cooley, Editor
543-8682 or dianec@u.washington.edu



RECOGNITION REVIEW

QSTEP

Shawna Litterski, Payroll, received a QSTEP award on January 6 for the behavior of Collaborative. Shawna takes the initiative to develop herself and her teammates by encouraging involvement in courses and training opportunities. She listens in a nonthreatening and nonjudgmental way; she is very patient with customers and colleagues, listening and explaining how systems work in an easily understandable manner. Shawna works effectively with others in meeting customer needs and willingly challenges processes and people using respect and understanding. She is always looking for respectful ways in which her job and other processes can be dealt with more effectively and efficiently. Shawna participates willingly and actively in her work unit, her department and on teams. “Shawna ...is synonymous with being participative, cooperative, flexible, positive and a team player.” Finally, she shows a genuine interest in others. “She is always concerned about how we are doing, including taking an interest in knowing about our families and our interests outside work.”

Teresa Crisostomo, Travel, received a QSTEP Award on March 9th for the behaviors of Collaborative and Committed.

From the nomination form on the behavior of Collaborative: “Teresa is an exemplary team player and is always asking to learn new things. When she has finished her tasks, she shows her flexibility by learning new

processes so she can help others. Teresa was an active participant when we had a meeting with the accountant and general manager of the Edmond Meany Hotel. She politely challenged their new invoice system and explained how it was causing problems in the Travel Office. She made positive suggestions as to how they could improve their invoice and they agreed with her.”

From the nomination form on the behavior of Committed: “Teresa is hard working and committed to developing good relationships with all clients and coworkers. She is always willing to go the extra mile to help out and takes responsibility willingly. She likes her job and is dedicated to improving processing techniques as well as encouraging her coworkers to be equally motivated. Teresa always looks forward to accepting new challenges and learning new tasks. It would take at least two people to replace her!”

RQT Web Site

Michael Fero, Financial Management

A web site containing information on the Recognition Program has been put up at <http://www.washington.edu/admin/finmgmt/qi/rqt/index.html>. Forms for nominating colleagues are available in Adobe's Acrobat format and can be printed out on your desktop printer (assuming your printer has enough memory).

I am interested in any thoughts you might have to improve the sight—email me at mfero@u.washington.edu

Kudos

Diane Cooley, Student Accounts

Great customer service. That's what we hear about Financial Management. Emails raving about something we've done travel to manager and on up to V'Ella and even Weldon Ihrig.

Here are some highlights from those emails (edited for space) that were sent from January through March. Beginning with this issue we'll include kudos as a regular feature.



- Thanks to Gayle Gilbert, Carole Breeden and Anita Bingaman for helping the distraught, elderly Albanian lady who was lost and spoke no English. After several unsuccessful attempts at finding a translator and much hand gesturing the group was able to call the lady's family and Gayle drove her home. *Amalgam*

- I just wanted to congratulate all of you on the final approval of the Board of Regents' Finance & Audit Committee's unanimous approval today of the first-ever MBA Student Investment Fund. This was truly a team effort and could not have been done if not for each of you at various steps along the way. In fact, the Committee was not only pleased with the idea, but was amazed at the speed of formation and implementation of the Fund. Their comments are a tribute to all of you. I was so very proud of Matt, Paul and V'Ella today in the meeting. They did such a great job representing all of us at the Business School. *M. Storkel*

- I am very happy to announce the improvements which were made on the Payroll Overpayments process. This process was completed by the team of Carole Breeden, Shawna Litterski and Tahalita Kia. This process is one in which the payroll manage-

ment had long had concerns about the lack of control, the timeliness, number of customer complaints and other inefficiencies in the process. This team came up with an accurate, efficient manner of processing new overpayments to resolve them quickly.

Niki Dorn

- Marge Soini's volume statistics for Autumn 1999 were quite impressive: 12,331 checks; 4,328 student account transactions; 965 cash transmittals. Congratulations Marge. Fantastic job! *Miriam Garvey*

- A letter was received from the Language Learning Center regarding Heather Cahill for her wonderful and friendly service. Good Job! *Miriam Garvey*

- I just want to take a moment to let you know how much I appreciate each of your staff's (V'Ella Warren, Karen Kavanagh) willingness/ability/competence to help with a recent issue. A friend of mine filed for disability via the UW's LTD plan with Standard Insurance. For my friend and me, it was an arduous process and I'm very grateful to have people at the U who know their processes/jobs so well. There are a number of people involved that have been patiently answering question after question. (Janice Mercer, Marli Bennett and Joni McDonald in Financial Management; Amy Hawkins, Val Olivers and Jean Swarm in Human Resources) Each of their answers demonstrated a willingness to help and we received excellent explanations of what we needed to do. *Linda Braziel*

- Weldon, V'Ella and Frank: in order to increase our collections from some borrowers previously unheard from, Sandie Rosko and staff wrote a friendly letter to these borrowers, using Season's Greetings Stationery. You'll note below that we had a very respectable 19% response rate, resulting in collections of over \$3,600 *Ruth Johnston* Sandie and Pam, Your Christmas letter idea is great way to make use of the holidays to get real results. Thanks for being so creative!!! *Weldon Ihrig*

• GCA New Accounts is one of the best managed departments I deal with at the entire UW. And I can speak for my boss as well, (Jean Garber, Environmental Health Administrator) that we have gotten consistently EXCELLENT service from GCA New Accounts. I wish the rest of the UW central offices could be so efficient, have such accurate and thorough job knowledge, and consistently deliver such timely good results! Your group would get my vote for merit bonuses for jobs WELL DONE!! Thank you again and again. *Becky Rooney*

• Just wanted to let you know how delighted the College of Ocean and Fishery Sciences and its schools are about the changes in travel processing. We especially appreciate the fast reimbursement for travel claims up to \$1000. Thanks to you and the travel staff for instituting this extra effort and making it work! *Anita Whitney*

• I hope this doesn't embarrass you but I just wanted to let you and others know how supportive and helpful your entire staff (Payroll) is both to me personally and the School of Business. To a person, your staff is helpful and friendly and goes the extra mile. Normally I would name the individuals who have been the most helpful, but in this case it is everyone we have encountered. Congratulations...I personally hold you (Niki Dorn) responsible for the excellence!
Betsy Raleigh

• I just wanted to congratulate all of you (Matthew Clay, Ali Tarhouni, Paul Malatesta, V'Ella Warren, William Bradford) on the final approval of the Board of Regents' Finance & Audit Committee's unanimous approval today of the first-ever MBA Student Investment Fund. This was truly a team effort and could not have been done if not for each of you at various steps along the way. *Mark Storkel* Susan and Judy should be the ones taking bows. They both put effort into the guidelines, etc. for this program.
V'Ella Warren

• I want to thank you (Anna Meegan) SO MUCH for your enthusiasm, professionalism and down right good nature. I've been telling people here that since I started working for the U three years ago, you are one of only *very* few who went the extra mile. (I guess you could say that you live the program (recognition) and its philosophy to its fullest.) *Beth Lyon*

• Just want to let you and the UTG group know that today I processed over 70 PAFs on line. Took me most of the day, but it was a great day. In the olden days it would have taken me about the same amount of time, or even longer to fill out all the required info on the PAFs. Then ...the approval process...then the entry process... while I sat here chewing my fingernails waiting for results, usually a week or longer after submitting the paperwork. Now all that work has been eliminated and I am GLAD! Keep going, let me do more and save time and effort for everyone else, (and save my fingernails). Thanks for all your good works!
Susanne Parker

• Tim—If I am not mistaken, you are DeLynne Lahtinen's supervisor, and I want to tell you how much I appreciated her help in guiding me through a particular process recently. The result was that we now have access to some surplus grant funds that we can use for some much needed classroom equipment. She called, told me the situation, told me what I had to do, and asked me to follow up with her if I had any questions. I followed her advice (it was easy), and she was very helpful throughout. So, I wanted to express my appreciation to you for her great customer service. *Carl Krikorian*



Kudos (cont'd)

• I received a very nice thank you note from Carolyn Peck, the gal at Hazen High School coordinating the cleaning of Husky Stadium. She indicated the letter of apology we sent and the late payment helped “restore our faith in the University of Washington.”

Ann Anderson It proves once again that you can repair a lot of damage by a personalized response that acknowledges mistakes. *Frank Montgomery* Thanks for the feedback, and I appreciated the extra efforts that both Ann and you took in making this unexpected outcome a win for UW. *Weldon E. Ihrig*

• We just received a wonderful letter of recognition from the Director of Acquisition of the Department of Navy for our work with them on the Navy EDI/EFT program. We’ve been working with them since 1996 on new on-line invoicing programs and more recently beta tested a major new payment request system. Dan Lemire, Monique Bradley, Brian Baldwin, and Hoang Ong with leadership from Patricia Bradshaw were all involved in this very challenging and successful effort. *S. Trumbull-Camber* Congrats on your well-deserved recognition. The Navy acknowledged that the UW occupies a “position of significance” as a major recipient of Navy funds. But thanks to all of you and I’m sure others unnamed, we are recognized also for our competence in getting the EDI/EFT pilot operational. *Frank Montgomery*

• Over the last month, a Regent and a former Regent have recommended the UW private equity program as a benchmark to emulate to other foundations/universities. That reflects well on the work of the Investments staff, particularly Doug Breckel.

V’Ella Warren

...Mummy (cont'd)

Scoop: How would this team help the University? Isn’t it only benefiting the Payroll Office?

TRTM: No, by recognizing the needs of the Payroll Office, they’re also recognizing the needs of the Payroll customers. You can’t improve a process if you don’t know who your customers are. They’re both external and internal, and the service we provide either should be exceptional.

Scoop: Do you have any final thoughts to share with our readers?

TRTM: As long as you keep in mind the principles of QI you will succeed. It’s just like I always say, “Help your customers accomplish their objectives. That’s how to make your company better for everyone.”

Office of Financial Management
280 Gerberding Hall, Box 351248
Seattle, WA 98195-1248

