

Department of Veterans Affairs
National Cemetery Administration

**Creating a Customer-Focused
Organization**

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Discussion topics

- ▶ Defining a customer-focused organization
- ▶ Understanding the Baldrige Systems Framework
- ▶ Integrating customer expectations with key components of the Baldrige framework
- ▶ Delivering Results
- ▶ Group exercise
 - Identifying
 - A key customer expectation
 - A activities and processes to include expectation

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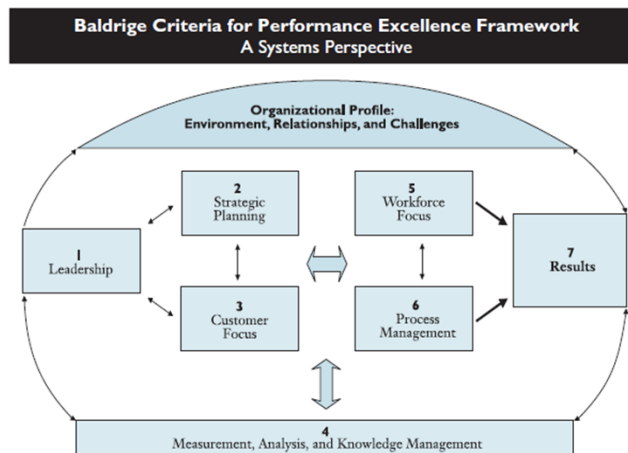
Defining a customer-focused organization

- In the National Cemetery Administration, customer-focus means everything we do points to improved customer service and satisfaction.
- Key components that drive customer service and satisfaction in NCA are:
 - Information (Accessibility, Clarity, and Helpfulness)
 - Customer Service (Courtesy and Professionalism)
 - Cemetery Services (Service respectful, Maintain as National Shrine)

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Understanding the Baldrige Systems Framework (2009 - 2010)



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Integrating customer expectations with key components of the Baldrige framework

▶ Leadership

- Communicating:
 - Customer satisfaction scores,
 - The importance of getting it right the first time, and
 - Future expectations at all key briefings
- Prioritizing efforts to improve
 - Information,
 - Customer service, and
 - Cemetery services

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NCA Leadership System



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Strategic Planning links customer expectations, strategies, objectives, business priorities, and a balanced set of measures.

Table shows a sample set of objectives, measures and goals from the plan.

Objectives	Key Measure	Goal	Proj	Target
		2011	2012	
Make it easier for Veterans and their families to receive the right benefits, meeting their expectations for quality, timeliness and responsiveness	Percent of applications for headstones and markers that are processed within 20 days for the graves of Veterans who are not buried in national cemeteries.	90%	90%	90%
	Percent of graves in national cemeteries marked within 60 days of the interment.	95%	95%	95%
	Percent of Veterans served by a burial option within a reasonable distance (75 miles) of their residence.	89%	90%	94%
	Percent of respondents who rate the quality of service provided by national cemeteries as excellent.	97%	98%	100%
	Percent of respondents who rate national cemetery appearance as excellent.	99%	99%	100%
	Percent of headstones and markers that are delivered undamaged and correctly inscribed.	98%	98%	98%
	Percent of headstones, markers and niche covers that are clean and free of debris or objectionable accumulations.	90%	90%	95%
	Percent of headstones and/or markers in national cemeteries that are at the proper height and alignment.	73%	78%	90%
	Percent of funeral directors who respond that national cemeteries confirm the scheduling of the committal service within 2 hours.	80%	84%	93%
	Percent of gravesites that have grades that are level and blend with adjacent grade levels.	89%	90%	95%

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A focus on our key customers – multiple listen and learn methods

- **Veterans and their families**
 - Survey of National Cemeteries
 - Memorial Program Service Product and Service survey
 - American Customer Satisfaction Index
 - Positive and negative comment logs
- **Funeral Home Directors and staff**
 - Survey of National Cemeteries
 - Memorial Program Service Product and Service survey
 - Positive and negative comment logs
- **General Public**
 - Positive and negative comment logs
 - Social media

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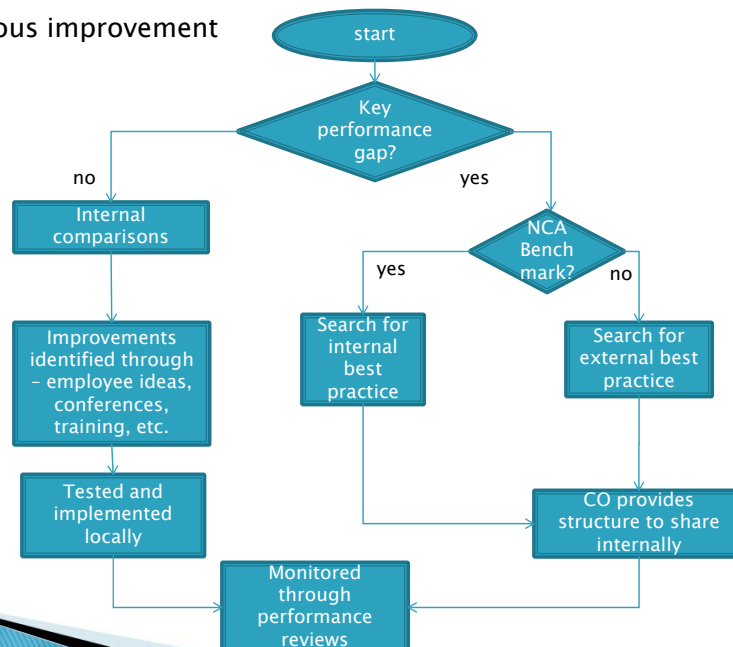
Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

- Balanced measures
- Shrine Standards (aligned with customer expectations for appearance)
- Communities of Practice (Standards, Standard Operating Procedures, sharing of successful practices)

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Continuous improvement



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Innovation: NCA is currently working on joint patent for a trimmer mower



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Innovation: NCA designed a special attachment for a Toro vehicle to transport a casket to the proper gravesite without damaging the turf or nearby gravesites



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Integrating customer expectations with key components of the Baldrige framework

▶ Workforce Focus

- Training and development efforts to improve customer service skills, information skills, and cemetery appearance
- Recognition (Shrine Status) for facilities and associated employees

▶ Process Management

- Customer service and satisfaction metrics linked to key business processes
- Prioritization of appearance projects (shrine projects) based on gap between target and customer survey response score for each cemetery
- Placement of new cemeteries based on veteran population and travel time
- Process analysis and improvement when performance falls below expectation

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Innovation: Preset crypts being installed at Sacramento Valley National Cemetery. A few hundred to several thousand crypts may be installed at a time.



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Business Results

- ▶ If customer expectations are built into your processes
- ▶ If your processes are managed to deliver on customer expectations
- ▶ Then results will follow...





NCA 's ACSI score of 94 in 2010 exceeds all public and private sector scores.

- National Average ACSI - 76
- Federal Government average ACSI – 69

- Railroad Retirement Board - 88
- Veterans Health Administration - 88

- Lexus – 85
- Ford – 89
- H. J. Heinz – 88
- Netflix 87
- Google – 80

NCA has had the highest scores in the ACSI each time it has participated (2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010).

Group exercise – 15 minutes

- ▶ Identify a Key Customer requirement for your industry (for example – timeliness, error-free, reliability)
- ▶ Identify a customer focused metric for this requirement.
- ▶ Identify a business focused metric for this requirement.
- ▶ Identify how this requirement could be integrated with:
 - Training
 - Standard Operating Procedures
 - Performance Management System

Group discussion – 5 minutes

- ▶ What was an industry and key customer requirement that someone identified?
- ▶ How could this requirement be measured to assess customer satisfaction?
- ▶ How might this requirement be measured from a business point of view?
- ▶ How might this business requirement then be linked to training or the performance management system?
- ▶ If we look at the metrics our organizations currently monitor – how many see a strong relationship among process metrics, output metrics, and customer requirements?