

How Water Works

ILLUSTRATED PROCESSES, EQUIPMENT, AND TECHNOLOGY

Administrative Processes Set to Satisfy Customer Demands

Water utilities work for customer satisfaction to minimize complaints and associated costs, maintain goodwill, and increase support for utility improvement initiatives. A good way to improve customer satisfaction is to optimize a utility's administrative processes that directly affect customers.

1. Customer services include call center operations, billing, payment, credit, and collection. The quality of customers' service experience defines customer opinion of a utility, so good service ultimately reduces complaints and enhances the utility's image within the community. Best-performing utilities offer customers many options for billing and payment.

2. Management and administration staff provide support in the areas of finance and accounting, contract coordination, technical library maintenance, inventory, records, visual and audio services, information technology and telecommunications infrastructure, legal services, facilities and vehicle maintenance, insurance and risk management, and safety needs.

3. Finance manages financial resources and provides electronic record keeping. These responsibilities often are carried out through staff specializing in budgeting, accounting, treasury operations, rate administration, purchasing, and records and document administration.

4. Human resources directs and supervises all human resources activities, including interpreting, updating, and enforcing personnel policies; maintaining and revising classification and pay plans; and implementing policies, procedures, and programs related to recruiting, hiring, managing, and retaining employees.

5. Public affairs responds to customer concerns and manages customer relations,

maintains cooperative relationships with local administration and government agencies, coordinates the administration of distributor contracts, and facilitates the utility's relations with the general public and special public groups.

6. Operations and maintenance is responsible for overall plant operations, including ongoing facility maintenance and replacement, to the satisfaction of outside regulating agencies and local customers.

7. Planning identifies and integrates current and future water and facilities needs and resources. General activities include preparing and presenting demographic projections and raw and treated water consumption forecasts, developing short- and long-range plans for facility developments, and forming, analyzing, and interpreting hydraulic studies.

8. Engineering is responsible for the design, construction, and related engineering aspects of physical additions or improvements to the water system.

9. The meter shop installs and maintains all residential and commercial water meters. Although use of automated meter reading technologies is increasing, most water utilities still manually read most of their meters.

10. Purchasing and receiving oversees deliveries to the supply yard (10a), which houses the tools, materials, and equipment used in construction and maintenance work.

10a

6

7

9

8

10

2

5

4

3

1

ILLUSTRATION: RON KNOWLTON