

To: Board of Directors
From: Mary Proc
Vice President, Customer Service
Date: February 19, 2010
Re: Customer Service Update

GO Transit continues to show steady and significant progress on all dimensions that customers said were important to them.

The GO executive has continued to keep the “voice of the customer” at the centre of all its improvements. In 2008, customers reported the three things they valued most about GO were, “comfort, convenience and reliability”, and an update on each of these attributes is provided below.

GO’s Additional Service

Many American transit jurisdictions saw ridership fall in 2009 due to the recession. In contrast, GO’s ridership was stable over the previous year, after growing 24% since 2003.

A portion of this stability was due to GO’s continued focus on the needs of its customers. Firstly, GO introduced new services. On the busy Milton corridor, GO added an extra rush-hour train in the morning , and afternoon peak periods, providing space for an additional 1600 passengers during each rush hour. In response to customer demand, an extra train was added to the afternoon rush hour on Lakeshore East. A new excursion train service to Niagara Falls during summer weekends attracted 50,000 riders for the season, 85% of them new.

In terms of bus services, GO extended service in 2009 to Peterborough, the Niagara Region, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Cambridge. GO’s business model is to typically extend bus service to new service areas, wait until ridership has grown significantly, and then replace those buses with trains. The buses are then redeployed to grow more ridership in the system.

GO’s ridership is also heavily influenced by the latent demand for parking. In response to demand from its passengers, GO exceeded its target of 3500 parking spots, by adding 5000 new spots in 2009. Significantly, several new parking garages are now nearing completion, and will come on-line early in 2010.

GO's Reliability

GO has put unrelenting focus on improving reliability across all trains. Year over year, GO has improved its reliability, realizing a yearly On-Time Performance (OTP) of 90.3% compared to the previous year's OTP of 88.1%. There have been 7 straight months of improved reliability year-over-year.

Customers have noticed too. In the quarter captured by October, November, and December, 2009, customer complaints about reliability – year over year—fell by 37%.

Despite limitations which include a constrained Union Station, multiple construction projects underway, and shared use of its corridors with other train companies, GO's rail operations put an unrelenting focus on improved reliability. Daily teleconferences between GO and CN identify potential conflicts, which are usually resolved in advance of rush-hour service. GO also put a major focus on rail and bus equipment maintenance to ensure that inoperable doors, or other malfunctions would be diminished.

Following any service disruption, feedback from customers is carefully reviewed among the heads of customer service, rail operations, transit safety, stations, and bus services, to identify areas where GO recovered well, and areas requiring improvement. This new culture of continuous improvement, using feedback from customers, is at the heart of a fundamental culture shift within GO.

It must also be mentioned that “Mikey On The GO” was the right investment. Two lives were saved in the last year as a result of immediate access to these on-board defibrillators.

More Comfort

GO passengers usually define “more comfort” in terms of being able to sit down for their journey. In 2009, GO began using the longer 12-car trains, increasing capacity to offer an extra 315 seats per trip on the regular Milton and Lakeshore express lines.

All new platforms being built or improved at line stations are being equipped with heated shelters—the #1 station amenity that customers told GO they most wanted.

Higher Quality Information

GO is entering its second year with the new “Customer Service Ambassadors” (CSAs) onboard its trains. These ambassadors fulfill many functions, from deploying the ramp that makes GO trains accessible, to announcing service delays as quickly as they occur. The training for CSAs emphasizes being accountable and taking ownership of issues to provide a high level of service. Since taking over this function, commendations from customers have increased 200 per cent.

GO also has 47,000 customers signed up to receive E-news alerts. These are text messages that alert a passenger if there will be a delay to a train on their corridor. GO sent a survey to all 47,000 registered customers to ask for their thoughts on this communication tool. A total of 6,000 customers responded---a phenomenal response. At that time, passengers told GO they liked the short, clear language in the messages, but to change the threshold of reporting delays from 30 minutes to 15 minutes. In response to this feedback, GO changed the threshold immediately.

A new system of electronic signage at line stations and at Union is also helping keep passengers updated on the latest status of their train.

In response to requests from passengers, GO also improved the customer navigation through its website, and many more improvements to gotransit.com are planned in the months to come.

GO Listens

GO continues to benefit from guidance given by its Customer Service Advisory Panel--a volunteer group of nine GO customers representing all seven train corridors, bus services, and one representative who brings the "voice of students". These representatives are not ombudsmen for their lines, but do bring to the table issues that they have experienced and seen. They also provide valuable feedback on improvements to GO's website, GO's winter preparedness plans, and other changes that are brought to them for consideration.

GO is listening and continuing to improve. Starting in 2010, GO will be gathering information quarterly, and reporting customer satisfaction annually.

GO understands the value of listening internally as well. Our bus drivers, station attendants, safety officers and call centre staff all have valuable suggestions to help GO improve service. As a result, GO will have its employee engagement strategy ready by May 2010. Executing on this strategy will accelerate GO's ability to recruit, train, hear, and retain the high-calibre employees needed to provide an outstanding experience to GO customers.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Proc
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