

Customer Connections

The Administrative Services Newsletter for the Internal Customer

Volume 9, Issue 9

July 2008

July Monthly Observances

- Herbal/Prescription Awareness Month
- National Make A Difference to Children Month
- Social Wellness Month

Increase in standard mileage rate reimbursement!

Due to recent gasoline price increases, the IRS has increased the standard business mileage rate from 50.5 cents to 58.5 a mile for all business miles driven between July 1 and December 31, 2008.

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Message from the Executive Vice-President of Administration

As we celebrate our independence on July 4 – thought these 4 bits of flag trivia may come in handy (from *Real Simple*):

Who cut an American flag into pieces and was celebrated for it?

~Explorer Robert Peary. He scattered the shreds at the North Pole.

Is it ever OK to fly the flag upside down?

~Yes, but only in case of emergency. It can be used to signal a cry for help.

What is a vexillologist?

~An expert on flag history.

Who suggested the five-point star instead of George Washington's original six-point idea?

~Betsy Ross. And to show him how easy it was to make, she skillfully folded a piece of paper and cut one with a single snip of her scissors. (Yes, she was a star-spangled seamstress.)

On a totally different note, I recently read a newsletter from the College's auditing firm Brickley Delong (*Tax & Business Letter*). One of the headlines caught my eye:

"Do you just say or do customer service?"

A part of the article noted a complaint as being an opportunity ---

Nobody in business wants an unhappy customer, but when a customer complains, think of it as three opportunities in one.

1. An opportunity to get free feedback on something that's not working right in your organization.

2. An opportunity to convert a disgruntled customer into a loyal customer.

3. An opportunity to head off negative publicity as the complainer shares his/her gripe with others.

How do you turn a complaint to your advantage? Here are the four steps you need to take.

The initial response. The initial response to a complaint should be respectful and helpful, not defensive or "it's not our fault."

Understanding the complaint. Make sure you really understand the true complaint. This is perhaps the most important part of the process. By allowing the

customer to vent, you'll defuse a large part of the hostility and ill will. Also, this step provides valuable feedback to pinpoint the exact problem and find out exactly what went wrong.

Fixing the problem.

Employees must know clearly who has the responsibility and the authority to fix a problem. You may choose to compensate the customer for inconvenience, but at a minimum, you must remedy the customer's immediate concern.

The follow-up. A supervisor or higher level manager should always follow up with the customer to make sure that the problem has been resolved. This is a key step in turning the customer from "disgruntled" back to "loyal."

Have a Happy Summer and remember the words of John Erskine ---

"I have never had so many good ideas as when I worked in the garden."

Diana R. Osborn

Communicating Better at Work

By the editors of *Communications Briefings*

Employees often show concern about the quality and quantity of communication at work.

Some claim that management gives only lip service to open communication but does little to really communicate with them.

Others contend their organizations believe that posting notices on bulletin boards and sending out memos provide adequate communication.

Still others say they receive vague instructions that are difficult to follow.

Ineffective communication often results in poor cooperation and coordination, lower productivity, undercurrents of tension, gossip and rumors, and increased turnover and absenteeism.

Experience shows there are many ways managers can improve internal communication. Here are some things you should do:

- **Understand that** communication is a two-way street. It involves giving information and getting feedback from employees. It isn't finished when information is given.
- **Put more** emphasis on face-to-face communication with em-

ployees. Don't rely mainly on bulletin boards, memos and other written communication.

- **Ask yourself**, each time you give an instruction, if the message is clear. Most vagueness is caused by failing to be specific. *Example:* Don't just tell an employee to "show more interest" in his or her work. If an employee spends too much time chatting with others, be specific about it.
- **View information** as "service to" employees and not "power over" them.
- **Listen to** employees; show respect for them when they speak. They'll feel like part of the team and will tend to be more dedicated and productive. *One way:* Ask questions to show interest and clarify points.
- **Don't just** talk open-door policy. Practice it by walking around and talking to employees. Allow people to disagree and to come up with new ideas.

- **Conduct one-on-one** meetings. Ask each employee to tell you how you can help him do a better job. Then how he can help *you* do a better job.
- **Prepare publications** frequently. Emphasize current issues that employees care about; don't substitute quarterly "prettier" publications for substantive, up-to-date ones.
- **Concentrate** on building credibility with employees. Managers who lack credibility and fail to create a climate of trust and openness aren't believed—no

matter how hard they try to communicate.

Communication isn't over when
you finish delivering your
message

Teach Employees the Value of Money

-*Speaker's Library of Business Stories, Anecdotes and Humor*

Insurance executive Peter Frame uses the following analogy to help people get a handle on how much a billion dollars represents: Let's assume that you have a billion dollars and decide to transport the bills to your bank by truck. How many trucks will be required? By accurately weighing a one-dollar bill, it is found



that it weighs 1.02 grams; it will require 445 bills to equal one pound. By computation, it is found that the billion bills will weigh 2,247,191 pounds and require 1,123 one-ton trucks to transport them, with enough one-dollar bills left

over to fill a half-ton pickup and still leave \$84,995 for pocket change."

Creative & Performing Arts Department July Events

Overbrook Art Gallery Exhibit

“44th Annual MCC Student Fine Art & Graphic Design Exhibition”

Open Thru September 13

Gallery Summer Hours—

Monday—Wednesday

9am—4pm

Thursday & Friday 9am—3pm

Gallery Hours July 21—August 15

Monday—Friday

9:00 am—3:00 pm

Theater

The Fantasticks

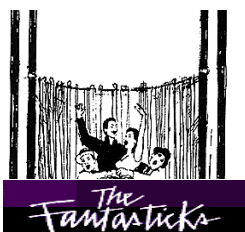
Muskegon Community College—
Center for Theater & Howmet Play-
house Presents:

A classic coming-of-age story, *The Fantasticks*, features two meddling, matchmaking fathers who scheme to get their children together. But once the couple is united, the real drama begins! Featuring the be-
loved songs “Try to Re-
member” and “Soon It’s
Gonna Rain,” this is a
celebration of love-first
love, lost love, and ulti-
mately, true love.

Written by Harvey

Schmidt and Tom Jones, *The Fan-
tasticks* has delighted audiences
across the world—including a record
shattering 17,162 performances at
the Sullivan Street Playhouse,
where it made its Off Broadway
debut in 1960. Whether it’s an old
favorite or your first time, you won’t
want to miss this timeless show
that’s certain to steal your heart.

July 3, 4, 5,6—Howmet Playhouse-
231-894-4048



Wellness Tip

Label Reading

The first thing you'll see is the label on the front of the food package. Manufacturers can say most anything they want on the front label (to get the real story, see the Nutrition Facts panel on the back). Here are some terms you may see there, and what they really mean:

Fortified, enriched, added, extra, and plus - This means nutrients such as minerals and fiber have been removed and vitamins added in processing. Look for 100% whole-wheat bread

and high-fiber, low-sugar cereals.

Fruit drink. This means there's probably little or no real fruit, and lots of sugar. Look for products that say "100% Fruit Juice."

Made with wheat, rye, or multi-grain. These products may have very little whole grain. Look for the word "whole" before the grain to ensure you're getting a 100% whole-grain product.

“Manufacturers can
say anything they want
on the front label.”

Natural. The manufacturer started with a natural source, but once it's processed the food may not resemble anything natural. Look for "100% All Natural" and "No Preservatives."

Organically grown, pesticide-free, or no artificial ingredients. Trust only labels that say "Certified Organically Grown."

Sugar-free or fat-free. Don't assume the product is low-calorie. The manufacturer may have compensated with unhealthy ingredients that don't taste very good -- and have no fewer calories than the real thing.



Improvements Notions Suggestions Ideas Not Complaints

Please turn in your INSINC to Conference & Catering Services by the 15th of the month and receive a free medium fountain beverage from the Bookside Bistro

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E=MC²

Education = Muskegon Community College

Happy Birthday

July

Janice Agard 2
Arun Datta 2
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Bette Naruszkiewicz 9
Sandy Ring 10
Joe Kennedy 11
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Bob Ferrentino 28

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Al Thomas 28
Keith Tanis 30
Bruce Wierda 30



WorkLife Services

Employee Assistance Program

Appointments available:
Monday–Thursday 8am–9pm
Friday 8am–5pm

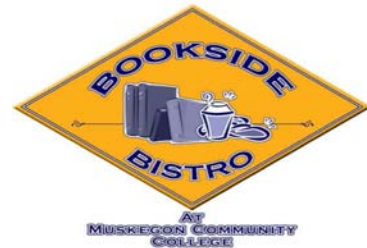
To make an appointment at one of these office locations,
call 231.726.3582

■ 1352 Terrace Street
Muskegon, MI 49442

■ Lakeshore Medical Center
905 E. Colby Street
Whitehall, MI 49461

■ Hackley Health at the Lakes
6401 Prairie Street
Muskegon, MI 49444

■ Mill Point Health Center
921 S. Beechtree, Suite 5
Grand Haven, MI 49417



AT
MUSKEGON COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

***Please Note:**
The **Bookside Bistro** will be **CLOSED**
for the rest of the summer beginning
Friday, July 4.

It will **OPEN** again for business begin-
ning
Tuesday, September 2.