

Evidence-Based Management

JACKSONVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Melonee Slocum, Manager for Strategic Initiatives*

The Jacksonville Challenge: Responding Quickly to Customer Feedback

The Jacksonville Public Library (JPL) is a county library system serving a large geographic area from a main library and twenty branch locations. The library was using a paper-based comment management system to gather customer feedback. Comment cards were collected at the branches and then centralized at the main library to be answered. The time it took to gather the comments and for someone not familiar with the problem to research the answer resulted in a significant delay in responding to the customer. In addition, going back through paper files to determine if there were trends in service suggestions or complaints was very cumbersome with a paper system.

“It’s easy to think we know what services and collections people want,” says Melonee Slocum, *Manager for Strategic Initiatives*. “But understanding customer satisfaction without the right tool is very subjective because we base decisions on the people we interact with. Customers are the reason we’re in business so the ability to make data-driven decisions and compare satisfaction levels over time is critical.”

Library staff experimented with database options such as Microsoft Access, but the solutions they found were not user-friendly or designed to track trends.

The LibSat Solution: Customer Satisfaction + Comment Management = Added Value

JPL has been using LibSat for customer satisfaction and comment management since July 2007. Each year library management takes steps to incorporate the data into the organization’s culture; in FY11 they are identifying trends from customer comments and plan to improve services based on those trends.

Underscoring the importance JPL places on LibSat data, the Board of Library Trustees changed its by-laws to ensure that a board committee would review the customer satisfaction data. Additionally, the library sends LibSat reports monthly to city departments responsible for library IT and facilities management so they also can see the level of satisfaction with their services and review the comments customers have made about those services.

Slocum says that training and education were important to secure staff buy-in to LibSat. Initially there were questions about how the data would be used and whether the survey results were statistically valid. “Our Customer Satisfaction Advisory Team worked with staff to help them understand the benefits of continuous feedback,” she says. “We wanted them to see how the data would be integral to our

performance measures. Now we find that the more they use the data the more it becomes part of our culture.”

Building a Customer-Focused Culture: Survey Results Drive Change

JPL established criteria for evaluating the data and determined that a movement of .5 on a 10-point system would be deemed significant. Slocum says that over the three years they have had the system their overall satisfaction rates haven’t changed much. However, when they see a trend of .5 or greater in a certain area (either a decline or increase in satisfaction) they analyze what caused the change.

Based on LibSat data, Slocum says they are altering their model for helping customers. “We need to do a better job approaching people and offering to assist them. We have a traditional service model for reference with staff behind a desk but our scores are lower than we would like in this area. We’re implementing greeter and roving services to see if we can improve our service and raise our scores.” She says they are making scheduling changes, staff are receiving additional training, and the initiative is being incorporated into performance measures to evaluate not only if it’s being done but how it’s being done. “We are taking the feedback from the survey and continuing to work on that particular service delivery to change the way we interact with people.”

In addition to trends, LibSat also provides immediate feedback on customer complaint issues. JPL uses **Counting Opinions’** **InformUs** as their “Contact Us” online comment form.

The information gathered on these forms feeds into their LibSat report and has completely replaced their paper comment cards. Issues such as a malfunctioning wifi network and cell phone noise were identified through InformsUs and LibSat and could be acted upon swiftly. “With the immediacy of the information we receive, a problem is identified and can be addressed quickly,” says Slocum. “We fixed the wifi problem and staff now remind people about the cell phone policy.”

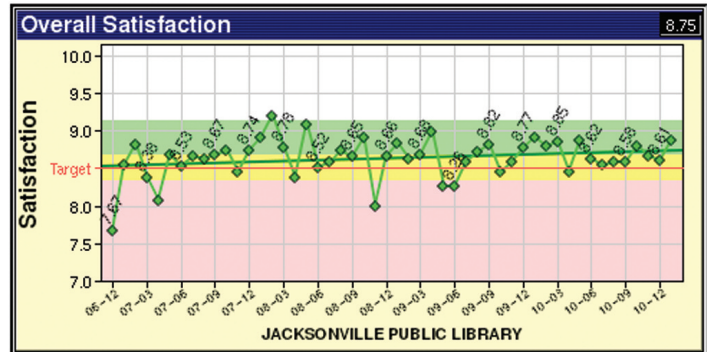
As part of their annual planning, JPL analyzes what they’ve learned through LibSat and determines what is important for their service plan. Managers focus on identifying trends that are within their control to respond to. These then become part of the performance measures for the year. In this way, staff can see that customer satisfaction is driving the work of the organization.

Slocum points to the following benefits of using LibSat:

- **Continuous customer feedback.** JPL has a navigation link on their website so customers can take the survey at any time. They have a pop-up promotion the last three days of each month to encourage participation and do a marketing campaign in January to provide an annual benchmark. Slocum says customers appreciate the opportunity to provide input regularly.
- **Allows wide sharing of information.** The Senior Administrative Team looks at the reports and shares them with the Board, other city departments and the branch managers. This ensures a system-wide commitment to understanding customers and managing customer satisfaction. Slocum says it’s the best data they have that’s not based on observation or anecdotes.
- **Provides support for library funding requests.** JPL has used the LibSat data to support requests for computers and IT upgrades or changes. The reports document the need as expressed by customers, supplementing recommendations of library staff and management.
- **Aligns the Board more closely with library services.** Comparing year-to-date data to the prior year helps the Board assess needs and understand the services of the library in a more concrete, less abstract way.
- **Improves relations with other city departments.** The departments that support the library appreciate the feedback they get on their areas of service. Sharing data with other city departments builds visibility and demonstrates the library’s strong commitment to improving customer satisfaction.

- **Supports trend analysis.** Slocum says the more trend data they have the more meaningful it becomes. She pulls reports from the comments based on certain key words to evaluate various aspects of service. As the number of completed surveys adds up a picture emerges and staff gain better knowledge of people’s experience at the library.

Performance Trends



Note: This chart is one of many that is produced and updated in real-time and is available on demand to JPL management via their LibSatreport output(s) functionality.

Slocum says that although it is not always possible to see a direct causal relationship between something the library has done and customer feedback, the numbers are there and trends emerge that can create action items that lead to improved customer service and satisfaction. “Once you’ve figured out your methodology and how you plan to use the data, it is a terrific tool. You’re looking at data over time—rather than a single snapshot in time—and that trend data is what is meaningful.”

About Jacksonville Public Library

The Jacksonville Public Library is an American Star Library, selected from 7,268 public libraries nationwide by the Library Journal Index of Public Library Service. The Jacksonville Public Library provides programs and services to Duval County residents at the Main Library and 20 branch locations with a collection of more than 3 million materials. More than 5 million people visited Jacksonville Public Libraries last year. For more information about the Jacksonville Public Library, visit jaxpubliclibrary.org.

Note: Interview conducted and case study prepared by JAM Marketing LLC



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