



NCARB improves the quality of service; introducing an online application, ongoing staff development, and improved processes

## Smarter Customer Service: Smarter Customer Systems

In 2005, NCARB adopted a Strategic Plan to serve as a guide for the Council in our mission to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of the public and assist Member Boards in carrying out their duties. The second element of the Strategic Plan is a directive to become a leader in delivering excellent, personalized customer service.

This spring, NCARB took steps in the ongoing effort of improving customer service by upgrading our phone system, providing additional training to staff, and implementing new tools to assist in the hiring of quality staff.

### ONLINE APPLICATION

Another major step in improving customer service was launched recently: the online application. It is estimated that this will reduce the time it takes for the initial processing of a NCARB Record application for certification and IDP from three to four weeks, to one week or less.

In the old system, the payment had to be processed through accounting before the

application could be processed. Now, the payment (by e-check or credit card) is processed immediately online.

Before, information from the application had to be keyed into the NCARB database (which often required deciphering the applicant's handwriting). If there were any errors or omissions, a copy of the application was mailed back to the applicant for corrections. Once all the correct information was received and entered into the database, the applicant was mailed a request for transcripts, work experience, confirmation of exams taken, and previous registrations.

Now, the applicant's electronic record is created instantly in our database, and populated with the data the applicant enters. A step-by-step application process guides the applicant by clearly describing the information required. The application can be completed online in one session, or saved and completed at a later time. The online application includes built-in mechanisms for catching errors and omissions, and will not allow

the applicant to proceed unless all fields are correct and complete. This reduces the time it takes to process an application because the time-consuming delays caused by missing and incorrect information are eliminated.

As soon as the application is submitted, a packet of required forms is created online for the applicant to download immediately, so the applicant doesn't have to wait for a packet of verification forms to arrive in the mail.

For applications submitted without problems, this entire process can happen within minutes. If there is a problem with an application, a notice is sent to NCARB staff. Depending on the problem, and allowing for weekends and holidays, most issues should be resolved within a week.

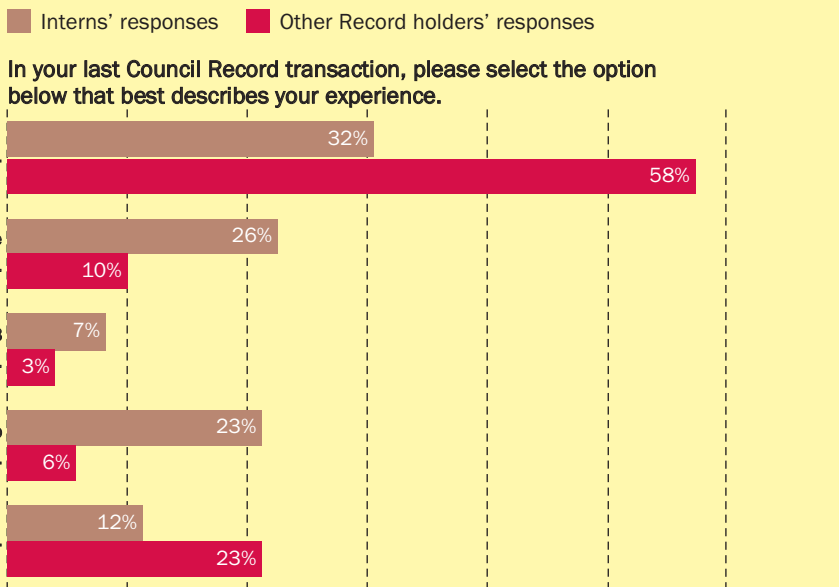
### BUSINESS PROCESS RE-ENGINEERING

The online application is a pilot project of the Council's overall Business Process Re-engineering efforts. In June, ICP International (ICPI) began an in-depth process to review and make recommendations on how to

**The survey says...**

NCARB would like to thank the Record holders who responded to the customer service surveys e-mailed to them last July. The surveys—which were sent to 41,901 interns and 37,543 other record holders—were one of the first steps in our Business Process Re-engineering project to improve customer service. Our consultants, ICP International (ICPI), used the information gathered from the surveys to document existing conditions and set goals for improving customer service. ICPI is now designing best practice models that will help us deliver the quality of service our record holders deserve.

The surveys asked the participants to describe their recent experience with NCARB, to share their expectations regarding reasonable turn-around times for delivery of services requested from NCARB, and rank the importance of Certification in their career. The graphs below show some of the survey results.



improve nine other customer service processes. The initial step was to document the existing conditions. ICPI then identified the root causes of errors and delays, and is currently designing best practice models to reduce them.

These models will be used to develop an entirely new customer service computer system, which will significantly decrease the Council's customer service response time. Of course, all of this can't happen overnight. The new customer service computer system will be designed, programmed, and rolled-out in phases over the next two to three years.

**COMMITMENT TO SERVICE**

That doesn't mean that it is going to take three years to improve the quality of service NCARB provides to Record holders. ICPI has identified many recommendations that will be implemented right away. With ongoing staff development, improved processes, and enhanced computer systems, NCARB will soon achieve its goal of becoming a leader in delivering excellent, personalized customer service. **DC**

**Rate the importance to you of each of the following on a scale of 1 - 5 (1=Not at all Important and 5=Extremely Important):**

