



LOBBY DIRECTOR PROGRAM

GUIDE

Office of Retail
Philatelic & Retail Services Department

CONTENTS

	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	2
II. SITUATION ANALYSIS	4
III. RETAIL SERVICES OBJECTIVES	7
IV. ALTERNATIVES	8
V. STRATEGY	9
VI. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES	9
VII. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES	10
VIII. APPENDICES	20

I. INTRODUCTION

The Lobby Director Program, which was developed by the Los Angeles Division, takes a pro-active, customer-oriented approach to lobby management. The program objectives are to say to customers by our actions:

"WE ARE AWARE THAT YOU ARE HERE AND WE WILL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO SERVE YOU AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE."

These objectives are accomplished at little or no cost by placing a friendly, knowledgeable, uniformed clerk in the lobby to greet customers, and provide information to assist them in obtaining the services they need. This prepares customers for the expeditious handling of their transactions once they reach the service window.

The program started in April, 1988, with a test in fourteen Los Angeles offices. It has been an overwhelming success, expanding, in October 1988, to 66 offices. The Los Angeles Division reports an 80 percent decrease in window-related customer complaints in offices with Lobby Directors. In 1989 Consumer Service Card System reports indicated that YTD AP 10, complaints about long lines were reduced by 52.54 percent and compliments increased by 62.16 percent versus SPLY. A customer opinion survey conducted by the division revealed that 97 percent of customers responding felt that the Lobby Director

Program improved service. Sixty-seven percent like the program because they felt it made the line move faster, and 25 percent said they liked being greeted and receiving assistance in the lobby. The program has also improved employee pride and morale.

The program was implemented in the following eleven pilot cities in December, 1988: Chicago, IL; Kansas City, MO; Baltimore, MD; Washington, DC; Boston, MA; Manchester, NH; Houston, TX; Oklahoma City, OK; Portland, OR; Tucson, AZ; and Inglewood, CA. Although Consumer Service Card information is yet available down to the five-digit level, reports from the pilot cities indicate that customer response to the program has been overwhelmingly favorable. In many cases, they expected long lines and rude clerks, but, instead, found courteous, friendly, helpful professionals in the lobby to assist them. Pilot offices received numerous written compliments on the program. For example, during AP 3 FY 89, the Portland Division received 250 written compliments. A summary of the compliments received by three Portland units appears in the appendix on page 52. The Lobby Director Program videotape that accompanies this plan was developed to provide an overview of the program as seen through the eyes of our customers, managers and retail employees. Based on the feedback from the pilot cities and the APWU, the program has been evaluated and refined, and a Lobby Director Training Course has been developed.

The Lobby Director Program has expanded to 37 divisions, including over 300 retail units. The program is being rolled out for nationwide implementation in offices that meet the criterion set forth in the Implementation Guidelines.

II. SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Postal Service has recently been under fire due to the service cutbacks caused by the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1987, along with the April 1988 rate increase. From a retail standpoint, many of the gains made during the first year following reorganization, such as the mobile retail vans and Adjusted Window Service hours, were lost with the cuts in window service hours and/or reduced window service staffing.

From a customer perspective, the rate increase that closely followed the service cutbacks added insult to injury. Customers viewed it as paying more money for less service.

The restoration of window service on September 10, 1988, was a major first step toward restoring the Postal Service's reputation as a responsive, customer-oriented organization. However, customers are now facing another rate increase.

Historically, the Post Office has played a major role in the community; it has been the community meeting place, and in a very real sense, a

source of community identity. Postal employees knew everyone in the community by name and were the source of community news, such as births, marriages and deaths. By virtue of the relationship with the community, the post office provided very personal service to its customers. This relationship still exists in small community post offices across the country; however, in larger city offices, service has become somewhat impersonal. This may be as a result of the sheer number of customers that are served by each clerk in a large city office each day. Nationwide, out of 58 complaint categories, long lines ranked number 8 in receiving the highest number of customer complaints, YTD, A/P 10, FY 89. Waiting in line is the number one customer complaint in the retail category.

The letter carrier has traditionally provided a strong, positive postal image in the community. Due to changing lifestyles, i.e., the increase in two-career, single parent and single person households, along with the increase in centralized delivery, the window clerk is replacing the carrier as the Postal Service representative that customers interact with most often. One of the biggest advantages we have over our competitors is that we have more contact with our customers than all our competitors combined.

We must make every contact count. We can rebuild our reputation and improve our public image by providing courteous, efficient personal service through knowledgeable, consultative salespeople, in a clean, attractive retail environment.

At times, in post office lobbies, our customers:

- o Must wait in long lines.
- o Wait more than five minutes.
- o Have no human contact until they are served at the window.
- o Must obtain all information regarding their transaction from the window clerk once they arrive at the window.
- o Endure a wait that seems interminable when the line becomes stagnant, due to the length and complexity of the transactions being handled at the window.
- o Upon arriving at the window, find they do not have what is needed to complete the transaction, i.e., their package is not properly wrapped, necessary forms have not been completed, etc. They are asked to step aside so other customers can be served while they complete forms or prepare their mailing.
- o Reach the window only to find that it was not necessary to get in line at all, i.e., they could have used vending machines or mailed in their change of address cards.
- o Receive a service they don't need or fully understand because clerks are under pressure to reduce the line and may not have taken the time to question customers regarding their needs or explain the services fully. Customers may be spending money needlessly.
- o Feel their time is being wasted.

Clerks and Supervisors are also impacted by this situation:

- o When lines are long, clerks often hear customers complaining in the lobby. Frustrated customers take their anger out on clerks when they finally reach the window.
- o Due to pressure caused by the line and/or the supervisor, clerks are in a hurry and don't take the time to determine what services best meet the customer's needs. They don't take the time to up-sell Express Mail, Insurance, Philatelic and Packaging Products or explain the difference between certified and registered mail, etc. The Postal Service loses revenue.
- o Due to turnover and level of experience, some clerks need assistance in handling complex or infrequently handled transactions. This may cause one clerk to seek assistance from another, thus occupying two clerks.
- o Supervisors must respond to customer complaints about long lines and poor service.

- o Morale deteriorates because clerks are constantly under pressure to move the line quickly; they become more production-oriented and less courteous to customers.

The above situation projects a poor Postal Service image.

III. RETAIL SERVICE OBJECTIVES

To increase revenue, improve the Postal Service's public image through better allocation and use of available resources, to ensure that postal retail services are available and accessible to customers in a timely, efficient manner in an orderly, clean and attractive environment. 1/

It is not economically possible for the Postal Service to provide instantaneous service for each customer entering the lobby. Instead, the Postal Service goal is to provide a level of service that will produce an average waiting time of not more than two minutes for those customers who cannot be served immediately. This goal envisions that 70 percent of the customer on a an average day may have to wait for service, but 90 percent should be served in less than 3.5 minutes, and none should have to wait over 10 minutes. 1/

Postmasters achieve this goal though (1) proper training and staff scheduling, (2) use of procedures which expedite customer transactions, and (3) use of the Retail Analysis Staffing and Scheduling Model to determine how many employees should be on duty during all periods to maintain service levels within these guidelines.

1/

1/ POM section 221.

IV. ALTERNATIVES

1. Continue business as usual.

Unacceptable – projects poor postal image.

2. Have supervisors demand more productivity from clerks.

May cause increased stress, discourtesy, financial mistakes and poor morale.

3. Increase Retail Staffing.

Manpower, budget and space are usually not available.

4. Institute Lobby Sweeps.

- o Works only to a degree.
- o The objective of a lobby sweep is to clear people out of line quickly, however the line soon returns.
- o In many cases the supervisor is not able to leave other work, or is not present to perform the sweep.
- o The individual performing lobby sweeps are not trained to handle customers in a line situation. They do not have easy access to the materials and supplies necessary to quickly move the line by assisting every customer.
- o The individuals designated to perform sweeps are not identifiable; if supervisory, they are in business clothes; if clerical, they may or may not be in uniform. Customers are confused and identify this person as someone who belongs behind the counter serving customers.
- o Customers may perceive someone coming out to move the line as a panic reaction to a poor situation.
- o Customers may resent that lobby sweepers serve customers out-of-turn and only offer assistance to customers picking up left notice mail.

5. Institute Lobby Director Program.

See Section V and VI.

V. STRATEGY

Implement the Lobby Director Program by placing a friendly, knowledgeable, uniformed clerk in the lobby to greet customers, and provide information to assist them in obtaining the services they need. The clerk prepares customers for the expeditious handling of their transactions once they reach the service window.

VI. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Add to the tools available to postmasters in achieving the overall retail service objectives. To increase revenue, to improve the Postal Service's public image through better allocation and use of available resources, and to ensure that postal retail services are available and accessible to customers in a timely, efficient manner in an orderly, clean and attractive environment.

To improve the quality of the time customers spend waiting in line by initiating their transactions, answering questions and recommending services before they reach the window.

To set a new standard for customer service by providing customers in larger offices with the type of personal service that is characteristic of small post offices.

LOBBY DIRECTOR PROGRAM

Implementation Guidelines

**Lobby Director Program
Implementation Guidelines**

Contents

	Page
A. Program Coordinator Selection	12
B. Program Coordinators' Duties	12
C. Unit Selection	13
D. Lobby Director Selection	13
E. Lobby Director Duties	15
F. Uniform	16
G. Equipment/Supplies	17
H. Training	18
I. Scheduling and Staffing	18
J. Publicity	19
K. Reporting	19

A. PROGRAM COORDINATOR SELECTION

Marketing

The Retail Marketing Specialist will act as the Division Coordinator. At the MSC level, the individual currently responsible for retail programs or qualified designee will act as MSC Coordinator.

City/Field Operations

A staff member from each city/associate office area should be designated to act as Area Coordinator. It is recommended that the designee be a manager with a strong retail background such as an Area Manager, Stations & Branches or an Associate Office Coordinator.

B. PROGRAM COORDINATORS' DUTIES

Division/MSD Coordinators will be responsible for the following:

- o Program Implementation – Provide senior management with a program overview. Meet with Area Coordinators to develop a local program implementation plan. Meet with local APWU to advise them of program implementation plan and to gain their support for the program. Present program overviews at Postmaster and Station Manager meetings.
- o Training – Schedule and conduct training for Lobby Directors and their supervisors.
- o Uniforms and Equipment – Coordinate the acquisition of uniforms and equipment.
- o Program Evaluation and Coaching – Visit participating offices to observe program in action, offer advice and assistance to managers and coach Lobby Directors. Use Lobby Director Evaluation (Appendix page 56).
- o Develop Communications Network – Attend Lobby Directors meetings. Establish a support system for Lobby Directors.
- o Publicity – Coordinate program publicity through the Communications Manager.
- o Reporting – Consolidate and submit Lobby Director Program Report each A/P (Appendix, page 55).

Area Coordinators will be responsible for program implementation, monitoring, evaluation, coaching and conducting periodic lobby directors meetings in their area.

C. UNIT SELECTION

Implementation of the Lobby Director Program should be considered in these cases:

- o Customer relations could use improvement.
- o 90 percent of customers are not served in less than 3.5 minutes.
- o The office experiences long lines at peak periods of the day, week, month, or year.
- o The unit receives customer complaints about long lines, waiting time or employee discourtesy.
- o When the individual that conducts lobby sweeps finds that because of lack of training and/or materials they are only able to assist a portion of the customers in line, i.e., only customers waiting for left notice mail.
- o There are at least two full-time windows and one or more 4 hour (+) part-time windows in operation.
- o Where the employee will be safe working in the lobby. The existence of a bullet-proof screenline is not in and of itself a reason to exclude an office from consideration for the program. The Lobby Director carries no cash. Actually the program is needed to overcome the cold impersonal atmosphere created by the bullet-proof barrier.

D. LOBBY DIRECTOR SELECTION

1. Announcement

Unit Managers should present a program overview to all window clerks as a service talk. The overview should include these items:

- o Program Objectives
Show the following videotapes:
 - Lobby Director Program
 - Lobby Directors in Action
- o Lobby Directors Duties, Schedule, Authority, Uniform and Term of Assignment.
- o The Lobby Director/Window Clerk Team
 - Benefits to Lobby Director
 - Benefits to Window Clerks
- o Distribution of announcement letter and explanation of application procedures (Appendix, page 22).

2. Eligibility

All clerks with window service responsibilities in a participating unit are eligible to apply.

3. Application Procedures

Window clerks apply by completing the Lobby Director Volunteer Form (Appendix, page 24).

4. Term of Assignment

Every applicant will be given the opportunity to act as Lobby Director. Local management in consultation with the APWU representing the volunteers in each participating office will determine which of the following options will be used:

Option 1

The Lobby Director assignment will be rotated among all the volunteers. It will be assigned on a first volunteer, first-serve basis. If two or more clerks volunteer at the same time, the senior clerk would serve first in the rotation.

The primary director serves for three months. The next volunteer(s) substitute for the primary director on their days off, lunch hours, etc. for the same three month period.

At the end of three months, the substitute becomes the primary director and next volunteer becomes the substitute. This process continues every three months depending on the number of volunteers.

Note: Three months is the suggested term of the assignment, however local management may tailor the term of the assignment to local needs. Once a rotation is established, managers should consult with the APWU when considering a change in the term of the assignment. The final decision will rest with local management.

Option 2

The senior volunteer serves as the primary on a permanent basis. The remaining volunteer(s) substitute for the primary director on their days off, lunch hours, etc.

E. LOBBY DIRECTOR DUTIES

Lobby Directors perform the same duties as the clerks behind the counter with the exception of handling money. Directors must be knowledgeable, patient, courteous and neat in appearance. Positioned in front of the counter, they are able to react quickly to the customers' presence and concerns. When the lobby becomes busy, the Lobby Director will perform these duties:

- o Greet each customer as soon as they see them. Ask, "How can we help you?" and identify the customer's needs.
- o Recommend the services that best meet the customer's needs.
- o If necessary, explain the features and benefits of our services to assist customers in selecting a product or service.
- o Ensure that customers have the necessary forms and that they are properly completed.
- o Check to see if parcels are wrapped properly and help customers wrap packages to meet mailing requirements.
- o Provide packaging products, i.e., padded bags, boxes etc., allowing customers to prepare their mailing before they reach the window.
- o Direct customers to vending machines and to any special service window, such as Stamps Only, Express Mail, or Pick-up.
- o Answer questions.
- o Approve checks
- o Help weigh parcels.
- o Deliver vacation hold and accountable mail to customers in the lobby.
- o Handle inquiries and complaints,
- o Accept changes of address, P.O. box applications and request for vacation holds.

- o Provide any necessary assistance to customers in the lobby.

The director may also open Stamps Only or Express Mail windows and set postage meters.

F. UNIFORM

The following uniform will be worn to project the polished professional image we want for the Lobby Director:

Blazer	The director is outfitted in a light-weight navy blue blazer.
Warm Weather Option:	Navy blue vest may be substituted for the blazer only in warm weather.
Shirt/Blouse	Standard uniform item in white, blue or gold.
Neckties	Men's navy blue and red necktie. Women's navy blue and red necktie.
Slacks/Skirts	Men wear navy blue slacks. Women wear navy blue skirts/slacks (skirts are preferred).
Shoes	Men and women wear black or navy blue enclosed shoes.
Gold Badge	They wear an attractive gold badge with the Postal Service logo, the title "Lobby Director" and their name below. This is worn in lieu of standard window clerk badge.

This uniform is consistent with the new window clerk uniform as detailed in the notice on page 6 of Postal Bulletin 21771, dated June 28, 1990. The new uniform items should replace the old uniform as soon as possible. Blazers are to be purchased through normal procurement channels using PS Form 7381. For ordering procedures, specifications and suggested sources of supply, contact Gloria Cheek at PEN 268-6963.

G. EQUIPMENT/SUPPLIES

Directors work from a mobile cart/cabinet, a table or basket and carry all necessary supplies and forms to assist customers in line.

Although a standard mobile cart has not been selected, several divisions have constructed mobile or stationary carts. The approximate size should be 25" long x 18" wide x 42" high (appendix, pages 25–38). The cart will house a scale and serve as a customer writing and wrapping table. Built-in drawers or cabinets below will store the supplies needed by the director.

Other options being used include:

- o Use of a designated lobby writing table.
- o Small table with drawers positioned at the end of the queue.
- o Parcel slide
- o Rolling stock cabinets.
- o Rolling AV/Utility tables (Appendix, page 39).

We will continue to search for the optimum mobile cart and appreciate any suggestions from the field. In selecting this piece of equipment, unit managers should consider the lobby size and unique characteristics of their office. In any case, the equipment should be in good condition and present a professional appearance.

Supply List – Appendix, pages 40 and 41.

H. TRAINING

Lobby Directors will receive the Standard Lobby Directors Training Course (See Appendix, page 42). The newly developed course consists of eight hours of training focusing on the following areas:
Communications Skills, Human Relations Skills, Salesmanship Skills, and Product/Service Knowledge

I. SCHEDULING AND STAFFING

o Option 1 – For offices that only have lines during peak periods.

When not in the lobby, the Lobby Director works at a window (preferably one of the end windows). Whenever the number of customers in line exceeds two times the number of clerks serving, the Lobby Director closes his/her window and goes out into the lobby. This occurs during peak window service periods such as lunch hours, end of the day rush, and holiday periods. When the rush is over, the director reopens his/her window.

This option requires no additional work hours in LDC 42. The hours spent in the lobby are offset by the time saved by preparing customer transactions before they reach the window.

o Option 2 – For chronically congested or high traffic lobbies.

Lobby Director is scheduled full-time in the lobby and during slow periods performs allied window duties such as preparing second notices on left notice mail, returning left notice mail to sender, box mail distribution, filing notices, etc. These duties are performed near the service windows.

This option may require additional workhours in LDC 42 if the Lobby Director is used in addition to fully staffing the windows.
Note: Some offices using this option have been able to absorb these hours and remain within their current budget.

o Option 3 – For the offices that experience wide fluctuations in lobby traffic or only have lines during holiday seasons.

Use any combination of options one and two during these periods. This option allows for maximum flexibility in scheduling. Workhour usage will depend on the mix of these options.

J. PUBLICITY

o Local Internal

Announcement Letter (Appendix, pages 22-24)
Division - Newsbreak
Division/MSC - Employee newsletter article
(Appendix, pages 43-44)
Postal News Service - sample newsletter article
(Appendix, pages 45-47)

o Local External

Lobby Director photo/introduction/sign in lobby.
Local news release (Appendix, page 48).
Local story placement (Appendix, pages 49-51).
Optional customer involvement in local kickoff with Lobby
Director/Postmaster - coffee, donuts, etc.

o National Internal/External

Postal Leader article (Appendix, page 53).
PMG remarks before the National Postal Forum,
Los Angeles, CA, May 17, 1988.
Postmaster General's Annual Report - 1988.
Postal Retail Happenings articles
(Appendix, page 54).

K. REPORTING

- o Unit Managers submit the Lobby Director Report by COB
Wednesday following the close of each AP to the MSC Coordinator.**
- o MSC Coordinator submits a consolidated Lobby Director Report to
the Division Coordinator by COB Friday following the close of
each AP.**
- o Division Coordinator submits a consolidated Lobby Director
Report to Headquarters by COB the second Friday following the
close of each AP.**

Lobby Director Program Report - Appendix, page 55.

APPENDICES

	Page
1. Sample Announcement	22
2. Equipment and Supplies	25
3. Training Agenda	42
4. Newsletter Article, <u>Los Angeles Spectrum</u>	43
5. Postal News Service, Local Newsletter Story	45
6. Local News Release	48
7. Newspaper Article, <u>Herald Examiner</u>	49
8. Newspaper Articles	50
9. Customer Comments – Portland Division	52
10. Newsletter Article, <u>Postal Leader</u>	53
11. Newsletter Articles, <u>Postal Retail Happenings</u>	54
12. Lobby Director Program Report Form	55
13. Lobby Director Evaluation	56

T0: All Retail Clerks
Date

The (Division/MSC Name) is looking for enthusiastic clerks that have a desire to excel, help our customers and improve the efficiency of our retail lobbies.

Interested clerks will participate in the (Division/MSC NAME) Lobby Director Program, designed to help customers and retail clerks conduct transactions smoothly and efficiently.

Requirements: Applicants must be qualified clerks with window responsibilities.

Desirable attributes: Well-developed human relations skills, knowledgeable in window transactions, enjoys working with people, neat in appearance.

Lobby Directors perform the same duties as the clerks behind the counter with the exception of handling money. Directors must be knowledgeable, patient, courteous and neat in appearance. Positioned in front of the counter, they are able to react quickly to the customers' presence and concerns. When the service lobby becomes busy, the Lobby Director will perform these duties:

- o Greet each customer as soon as they see them. Ask, "How can we help you?" and identify the customer's mailing needs.
- o Recommend the services that best meet the customer's needs
- o If necessary, explain the features and benefits of various services to assist customers in selecting a product or service.
- o Ensure that customers have the necessary forms and that they are properly completed
- o Keep form racks stocked.
- o Check to see if parcels are wrapped properly and help customers wrap packages to meet mailing requirements.
- o Provide packaging products, i.e., padded bags, boxes etc., allowing customers to prepare their mailing before they reach the window.
- o Direct customers to vending machines and to any special service window, such as Stamps Only, Express Mail, or Pick-up.
- o Answer questions.
- o Approve checks.
- o Help weigh parcels.

- o Deliver vacation hold and accountable mail to customers in the lobby.
- o Handle inquires and complaints.
- o Accept changes of address, P.O. box applications and request for vacation holds.
- o Provide any necessary assistance to customers in the lobby.

The director may also open Stamps Only or Express Mail windows and set postage meters.

The Lobby Director will wear a navy blue blazer and skirt/slacks with a tie or scarf and a Gold name badge. Appropriate equipment and supplies will be provided for lobby directors.

If you are interested in participating in the Lobby Director Program, please fill out the attached form and return it to your supervisor.

Thanks in advance for your interest in this exciting new program!

Postmaster/Station Manager

**LOBBY DIRECTOR
Supply List**

Letter scale

Scissors

**Pens/markers – giveaway at times to promote Express
Mail/Automation/Philatelic**

Paper tape (for registered parcels)

Dauber to wet paper tape

Filament tape (for regular parcels)

Heavy duty stapler (extra staples)

Paper clips

Return receipts (100)

Change of address forms (50)

Customs forms (100 of each)

Express Mail labels (100 of each)

Express Mail containers

Envelopes (20)

Boxes and tubes (access to)

Express Mail Convenience Kits (20)

Priority Mail envelopes (20)

Retail Products

Large envelopes – Clasp type (20)

Padded bags (20 mixture of sizes)

Boxes, tubes and cushioning material (access to)

P.O. Box applications (10)

Calendar (reference)

Bad Check List

Zone Chart

**LOBBY DIRECTOR
Supply List
continued**

ZIP Code Directory (access to)

Domestic Mail Manual (access to)

International Mail Manual (access to)

Priority, Special Delivery, First Class, X-Stampers as needed

Rate Charts (giveaways)

Consumer Service cards

Promotional brochure giveaways, i.e., Pub. 201, Express Mail, etc.

Clipboards (4) to be used as customer writing surface when mobile chart or parcel slide are not used.

LOBBY DIRECTOR PROGRAM

Training Agenda

- 08:00 Introduction
- 08:10 Opening Remarks (Motivational)
- 08:25 Program Overview
 - Video – Customer Perceptions and Attitudes
 - Video – Lobby Director Program
- 08:55 Introduction of Lobby Directors and Managers
- 09:10 Video – Customers are People Too – 30 min.
- 09:55 Self Evaluation
- 10:15 Break
- 10:30 Video – Characteristics of Professional Salespeople – 30 min.
- 11:15 Exercise on Reading Emotions
- 11:30 Handling Complaints
- 11:50 LUNCH
- 12:25 Role of the Lobby Director
- 12:50 Lobby Director Procedures, Uniform, Equipment and Supplies
- 1:10 Transaction Script Exercise
- 1:40 Video—Lobby Directors in Action
- 1:50 Role Play Exercises ("Quick Fixes")
- 2:20 Break
- 2:35 Role Play Continued
- 3:35 Q & A
- 4:05 Wrap-up
- 4:30 Dismissed

Service consultants shorten lines

PMG Frank praises lobby director program

—Los Angeles Postal Spectrum June, 1988

A lobby improvement program in our Northwest Area station has captured the attention of Postmaster General Anthony Frank.

Since early December, service consultants have been stationed in all 14 of the lobbies in the Northwest Area, assisting customers upon their entrance to the post office.

These clerks, wearing red vests and distinctive badges, greet customers before they reach the windows. They authorize checks, provide information on filling out customs forms, direct customers to Express Mail windows or "Stamps Only" windows and provide information and assistance in many other postal matters.

The program was an instant hit. Area Manager James Smith said he was getting more than 20 complaints per week in his area regarding window service. Now, he doesn't get any!

PMG Frank heard about the service consultants when he was in Los Angeles for the National Postal Forum and his first comment was, "I think I've died and gone to heaven!" When he was out doing news media interviews, Mr. Frank asked if he could visit some stations unannounced to see the service consultants in action.

He was taken to the Village and Barrington Stations and was very impressed with what he saw. He immediately incorporated the innovation into his keynote address to the 1,544 Postal Forum participants and mentioned it in all his media interviews.

The PMG said he is considering national use of what he calls the "Lobby Director Program."

Bicentennial Clerk John Moore, who has been a service consultant since the program started, says customers "are very positive; they really like the

attention we give them. And we do make the lines shorter." Clerks, like Moore, spend about 70 percent of their time as service consultants and, during less busy hours, go back behind the counters to their original job of window clerk.

And the beauty of the program, as Area Manager Smith points out, is that it doesn't cost us anything. The service consultants are window clerks who work in the lobbies and, by doing so, keep customers happy and move our lines more quickly.

The idea for the program originated with Director of Marketing and Communications Ron Barco with assistance from Division Controller Tony Velardi. It was supported by City Operations Director John Galloway who asked Area Manager Smith to implement it.

The plan is for the other areas of the city to incorporate the program soon with as many as 75 percent of our stations and branches using service consultants by the end of summer.

In the future, this program will be called the "Lobby Director" program.

POSTAL NEWS SERVICE

Communications Department
Washington, DC 20260-3100

News and feature material for use in division publications

For further information call:

Andrea Nelliuss: PEN 268-2152
202-268-2152

Bob Anderson: PEN 268-2162
202-268-2162

April 20, 1989

(Communicators' Note: The Lobby Director Program begins its nationwide expansion this month. A formal Lobby Director training course is nearing completion, along with video tapes providing a program overview. The tapes will soon be sent to all divisions.)

Lobby Directors point customers in the right direction

No one enjoys waiting in line for service or information. So it's no wonder that postal customers at the (City) Post Office are expressing appreciation for the fast, courteous service they receive under a program recently introduced here.

The customer compliments are sparked by an active, customer-oriented approach to lobby management, according to (City) Division City Operations Director (name).

Called the "Lobby Director Program," it is receiving high marks for customer service and convenience, while reducing the time customers wait in line.

-more-

"The key to success has been the skill of our clerks," says (name), explaining that "directors" are window clerks who volunteer for the assignment.

When the office gets busy, the lobby director steps out from behind the counter, greets customers, provides information, and helps with a variety of services.

"Our directors are right there during the busiest hours, answering questions, approving checks, weighing parcels, and making sure forms are filled out correctly," (he/she) says.

With the exception of money handling, lobby directors perform the same duties as the window clerks.

"They're really doing a great job," says (station/branch manager or AO Postmaster) (name). "Customers love it, and we've received many compliments about providing this 'extra' service."

"We like the idea as much as the customers," says (name of lobby director). "Besides making things easier for customers, it eliminates hostile encounters at the window, when a customer might otherwise be told something is missing or incorrect."

"The idea is great for improving our image," says (name of office manager or PM). "Postal employees aren't separated from the public by the glass and counters anymore. When they're out there in the lobby, the isolation is gone and they're in personal contact. That way, the service is immediate and direct."

-more-

To present a professional and polished image, lobby directors wear special uniforms. Women wear a blue blazer, blue skirt, optional red or blue vest, and a scarf. Men wear a blue blazer, blue slacks, tie, and optional red or blue vest. All lobby directors wear a gold "lobby director" badge.

The Lobby Director Program, which originated in Los Angeles' West Palm Station in 1987, received high marks for customer service and convenience in some 30 cities where the program was tested.



NEWS

U.S. Postal Service

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information call Debra A. Hawkins
312/765-3009

Lobby Directors point customers in the right direction

Customers who hate waiting in line at the post office will love the Lobby Director Program. It speeds customers through post office lines and assures them of correct information about their transactions before they reach the window.

During peak times, such as lunch hours and just before closing, lobby directors step out from behind the counter, greet customers, provide information, and assist with a variety of services.

Since last December, they've been on duty at eight Chicago postal stations:

- Lakeview, 1343 W. Irving Park
- Station "E," 166 N. LaSalle
- South Shore, 2207 E. 75th
- Lincoln Park, 2643 N. Clark
- Uptown, 4850 N. Broadway
- Fort Dearborn, 540 N. Dearborn
- Grand Crossing, 7748 S. Cottage
- Main Post Office, 433 W. Van Buren St.

With the exception of money handling, lobby directors perform the same duties as window clerks. "They're right there during the busiest hours, answering questions, approving checks, weighing parcels, and making sure forms are filled out correctly," says Janet Norfleet, Chicago Field Division General Manager/Postmaster. "Besides making things easier and speedier for customers, this program eliminates frustration at the window due to missing or incorrect forms."

Lobby directors are easily identified by their special uniforms: Women wear a blue blazer and skirt, white blouse and a scarf. Men wear a blue blazer and slacks, white shirt and a tie. All lobby directors wear a gold "lobby director" badge.

"Customers love it," says Norfleet. "And we've received many compliments from customers about this 'extra' service." The Lobby Director Program, which originated in Los Angeles' West Palm Station in 1987, has been tested in some 30 cities.

jj: 4/89

Licking his job

**New Postmaster General Anthony Frank: "I feel awful about the window cutbacks."
Postal boss aiming high**

Herald Examiner June, 1988

Anthony Frank understands why consumers are upset with service cuts at the U.S. Postal Service.

"I feel awful about the window cutbacks," the new postmaster general said in an interview yesterday. "It was something forced on us."

Frank, who took office in March, said, "One of my objectives is to rebuild that love affair between the American public and the Postal Service." Improvements are on the way, he said.

The agency will expand its force of red-vested customer service representatives. Already at work in the lobbies of 14 post offices on the West Side, the representatives direct customers to the appropriate area to do their business.

The Postal Service aims to have the program in more than 75 percent of the Los Angeles Division's 60 post offices by the end of the summer.

Postal spokesman David Mazer said the program, which started last December, has already cut the total number of service complaints from more than 20 a week to none.

BOB LEVEY'S WASHINGTON

THE WASHINGTON POST TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1988

You could have knocked me over with a feather. The scene was the post office in the 1100 block of 19th Street NW, at lunch hour, five days before Christmas. A prescription for sardined humanity? Yes, indeed. The line was about 25 deep when I joined it, with a knowing sigh that said, "Levey, you'll be here for the next 45 minutes."

After about 45 seconds, a woman in a Postal Service blazer came over and asked if she could help me.

"I'd like to buy some stamps," I said.

"Just stamps and nothing else?"

"Just stamps and nothing else."

Whisk went my hefty self, out of line and in front of a clerk named Charles. He cheerfully sold me two rolls of 25s in less than a minute. I was out the door faster than I can recite my nine-digit Zip Code.

Better wipe off your specs, because you may not see these words again for quite a while:

Hooray, Postal Service!

Way to expedite. Way to manage. Way to go.

INSIGHT / DECEMBER 19, 1988

Helpers Aim to Speed Holiday Postal Lines

The holiday rush is on at the U.S. Postal Service, which estimates that more than 12.9 billion pieces of mail, including more than 2 billion holiday greetings and 70 million holiday packages, will be mailed before the end of the year. To cope with the flood of customers, the Los Angeles division of the Postal Service is sending red-vested window clerks into the lines to handle customer queries and otherwise speed up the sometimes painfully slow process of posting mail.

In addition to answering questions, the specially trained lobby directors, as they are called, guide customers to package pickup areas and assist them in filling out such forms as customs cards for international mailings and address changes before they reach a service window. "We don't have the statistics to back it up, but we know the lines move quicker," says David Mazer, communications manager for the service's Los Angeles division. Mazer measures success by the drop in customer complaints. "In a 12-office test earlier this year, the number of complaints about window service dropped from 25 a month to zero," he says. Now 56 of the 60 post offices in his division operate lobby director programs.

The public may eventually see the red-vested workers nationwide. More than a dozen divisions, from Boston and New York to Phoenix and Portland, Ore., are establishing similar programs, according to Mazer.

— Susan Dillingham

LOBBY DIRECTOR PROGRAM



Amherst Bee December 14, 1988

Trivia from Bee staffers...

by GEORGE J. MEASER, Bee publisher

● **GOOD SERVICE**— A tip of the Christmas hat also to the staff of the Williamsville branch of the U.S. Post Office.

Waiting time has been reduced for its clients by careful planning and expediting the package service. An experienced window clerk mans a separate portable desk to weigh packages and answer customer questions before the customer reaches the regular postal window. Using this unique system, the window clerk only has to punch the postage tape and collect the monies for the postage.

The system, set up on an experimental basis, has substantially cut the waiting time for postal service. The Williamsville branch is the busiest of the Buffalo sectional center.

POST OFFICE PROMISES LESS TIME IN LINE

Westmore News May, 1989

Are you tired of waiting in line for 15 minutes only to be told that you were standing in the wrong line? The Port Chester Post Office promises to change that experience with its new Lobby Director program.

The program, part of a Westchester Field Division agenda, is designed to ensure that postal retail services are accessible in a timely and efficient manner.

According to Daniel Kalso, acting superintendent of postal operations at the Port Chester Post Office, the Lobby Director program started in the West Coast postal system to give customers individual attention. "With this program we hope to personalize each transaction as best we can and help in cutting the waiting time," he said.

The program began on Monday, May 15 in Port Chester. Enrico Luchetta, who attended the Postal Education Center in Mount Vernon for training, is the local lobby director.

He will be responsible for directing customers to the proper line for their transaction, helping with the paperwork before they reach the service window and reducing the overall wait time.

Since the program began, customers have been very receptive, Luchetta said. "They liked that they could ask questions before they reached the window."

"The reaction has been very positive," said Port Chester Postmaster Basilio S. Caserta. "Our last name is service and that is what we're giving by endeavoring to reduce our customers' time in line. I'm excited about the Lobby Director program and so are my clerks."

SUMMARY OF CUSTOMER COMMENTS
PORTLAND DIVISION

1. Your Lobby Director really helped speed up our trip through the line.
2. Really like the Lobby Director Program.
3. Lobby Director excellent to expedite lines, thanks.
4. The service has been very pleasant and efficient, particularly the Lobby Director Program.
5. "Lobby Director" Program excellent, helps to keep lines moving. Keep it up!
6. Great help by postman stationed in lobby. Time saver for all concerned. Made for a pleasant experience. Young man helpful, kind and friendly to all.
7. Very good, compared to last year.
8. Cheerful Lobby Director, very helpful, clerks helpful.
9. Quick friendly service.
10. Thanks for being open Saturdays. The extra helper in line helped a lot too.
11. The lobby assistance on insurance, etc. really sped things up. Please keep him.
12. Excellent customer service, even with a smile.
13. Jon Gray was scooting folks along, a big help.
14. The best service ever, thank you.
15. I really appreciated having the postal worker helping in the waiting line.
16. The person out in the lobby helping with customer's mailings and labeling was a great help, shows the Post Office Department cares about the public.
17. Lobby package assistance is an excellent idea. This is a superb job under considerable pressure.
18. Excellent organization, i.e., stamps only. We came from _____, OR to Portland (13 miles) because of the attitude of staff here. Please advise personnel. We love it here.
19. Lobby Director Program is a stroke of genius. Director is excellent, helpful, knowledgeable and cheerful. Just what we need. Keep it up!
20. Great idea to have a greeter at the door to speed up service.
21. Fantastic new service. Lobby Director of great service. Friendly attitude.
22. Particularly pleased with Lobby Director who helped me re-box oversized package to Japan. Very helpful. Thanks.
23. Second time I've had the pleasure of your lobby attendant service customers with a cheery "Hello, how may we serve you?"
24. They sure worked hard and efficient so I didn't mind the wait.
25. You have spectacularly good service in this office, everyone should follow your example.
26. Service immensely improved. Thank you.
27. I am very impressed with the speed of service. Also pleased with your concern for customer satisfaction.
28. Lobby Director was helpful and very friendly. I like your new service.
29. My packages were handled efficiently and properly. There was very little waiting. Your people were alert and courteous. Thank you.



POSTAL LEADER

May 23, 1989

Lobby directors point customers in the right direction

The Lobby Director Program, a proven-successful method to reduce lines in larger units, is rolling out nationally this month.

Initiated in the Los Angeles Division in 1987, the program takes an active, customer-oriented approach to lobby management. The message to customers is clear: "We are aware that you are here, and we will do everything possible to serve you as expeditiously as possible."

The goals of the program are carried out by "lobby directors," friendly, knowledgeable uniformed window clerks, ready to assist customers and provide information before the customer reaches the window.

The benefits are clear. Customers

have personal contact with a postal employee as soon as they walk in the door. Lines are cut significantly because lobby directors can pre-certify checks, explain various services, provide forms and direct customers to vending machines.

The directors spend the busiest part of their day assisting customers in line, but when there is less activity in the lobby they step behind the counter as window clerks. They perform virtually the same duties as window clerks, with the exception of money handling. To help achieve a professional and polished image, directors wear special uniforms — blue blazers, blue slacks or skirts, optional red or blue vests, ties and scarves, and a gold

badge.

Gloria Cheek, marketing specialist in the Office of Retail at Headquarters, says 11 divisions have tested the program. Since the test, the program expanded to 34 divisions at more than 300 sites. Decisions on what lobbies will employ the new program will be made at the local level, she says. Eight hours of training designed specifically for lobby directors will be given at division offices.

Cheek says that where the program is introduced, there is a significant decrease in customer complaints, an increase in customer compliments, and improved employee pride and morale.

(continued on page 7)

Lobby (from page 1)

"It is quite obvious that retail customers appreciate the extra attention we give them," says Bob Pate, manager of station operations at the South Troost Station in Kansas City, MO. "Our lobby directors have received a lot of smiles lately," he says.

Postal Retail Happenings



They say it east and say it west: the lobby director program's best

From Los Angeles, CA to Columbia, MD come accolades for the innovative Lobby Director Program, now being implemented on a national basis.

"It's fabulous!" explained Alfred M. Fowler, Postmaster of Columbia, MD.

"It's going nationwide," said Gloria D.R. Cheek, Program Manager, Office of Retail, "in places that meet the criteria."

The Lobby Director Program, which features a distinctively clad facilitator on the customer side of the screenline to assist mailers and speed service, has already been implemented at 300 locations in 34 of the 75 divisions, Cheek said.

Training materials to promote further expansion of the system are now being provided to the field, including a printed overview and a videotape which focuses on the program's advantages from the perspectives of customers, managers and employees.

Divisions are encouraged to implement the Lobby Director Program in offices where, among other criteria:

- Ninety percent of the customers are not served in less than 3.5 minutes.
- The office experiences long lines at peak mailing periods.
- An inordinate number of complaints are received about poor counter service or employee discourtesy.

"After identifying offices where the program should be implemented," Cheek said, "the first thing a division must do is select a coordinator/trainer."

The quality of the person selected for that function will determine whether or not the program is a success, she said.

"The coordinator has to understand retail and have a working knowledge of the operations side of the business," Cheek noted.

"And, most importantly, he or she must be enthusiastic about the Postal Service and the program, and be able to project that enthusiasm to others."

"What we're trying to do with this program," Cheek observed, "is to provide in large post offices the type of personal service that is characteristic of small offices."

"The aim is to set a new standard for customer service." ■

Los Angeles customer complaints produced lobby director program

The Lobby Director Program grew out of the frustration that Manager James Smith experienced over the large number of complaints received in the Northwest Area of Los Angeles concerning long lines and poor window service.

"It occurred to me that hotels have their concierges and airlines have their expeditors. So why shouldn't we go that way," Smith explained.

"I took the idea to John Galloway, our Director of City Operations, and Ron Barco, Director of Marketing Communications, and they said go for it. Postmaster C.W. King fully endorsed the program.

"So, in November, 1988, we selected Olivia Johnson of Palm Station as our first Lobby Director.

"She did a magnificent job! She made people know we were aware of their presence, we were happy to have them there, and we were going to give them good service while they were there.

"Within hours after implementation, we knew this was the way to go. Ken Boheim was designated city coordinator and we extended the program to 14 stations.

"Today, we have Lobby Directors in all 60 Los Angeles postal units and complaints have dropped to zero," Smith said. ■

Columbia, MD lobby director program turns customer complaints to praise

Prior to last Christmas, the Columbia, MD post office was receiving many complaints about the quality of retail counter service provided and the waiting time required to get it.

"We implemented the Lobby Director Program and it is absolutely wonderful," said Postmaster Alfred M. Fowler.

"We've gotten at least 200 customer service cards saying how wonderful the program is," he added. "It's fabulous!"

Fowler said the system facilitates things for the window clerks and it "makes the customers feel that we care for them."

"With this program, customers are thoroughly prepared when they reach the window. The Lobby Director finds out what type of service they need, explains their various options, and helps them fill out any necessary forms while they're waiting.

"This saves time at the window and gives the customer a sense of accomplishment while he or she is waiting for service.

"Our Lobby Director is Ann Spiegler and her backup is Tony Brandi," Fowler said. "They are excellent. They love what they're doing, and that's important. For this program to succeed, you've got to have someone as your Lobby Director who's really enthusiastic about the Postal Service."

Fowler said it is vital that the Lobby Director understand that he or she is the Postal Service, as far as those waiting customers are concerned. ■

**LOBBY DIRECTOR
Program Report
Accounting Period _____**

REGION _____ **DIVISION/MSC** _____

UNIT _____ **ZIP CODE** _____

PREPARED BY _____ **PHONE** _____ **DATE** _____

	Current A/P	Previous A/P
1. Number of participating offices	_____	_____
2. Number of days utilized	_____	_____
3. Approximate number of hours spent in lobby	_____	_____
4. Estimate of average customer waiting time	_____	_____
5. Number of compliments regarding retail service	_____	_____
6. Number of complaints regarding retail service	_____	_____

COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Lobby Director Evaluation

Post Office: _____ Date _____ Time _____

Lobby Director _____ Supv./Manager _____

General Observations

1. Is the Lobby Director in proper uniform? Is the uniform clean and pressed?
2. Is he/she well groomed?
3. Has the cash drawer been set up?
4. Has the lobby been policed to dispose of any debris customers may have left on writing tables, etc?
5. Are writing tables well-stocked with mailing forms?
6. Does the Lobby Director have a work station that is stocked with all necessary supplies (including retail products) to assist customers in the lobby?
7. Is vending equipment stocked and operational? If the machine is out of order, has a professional out-of-order sign been placed on it, and has the manager or the responsible person been informed?

COMMENTS: _____

Lobby Director Evaluation

Observations of the Lobby Director in Action

Does the Lobby Director:

1. Quickly (without asking a supervisor) go into the lobby when the number of customers in line exceeds two times the number of clerks serving?
2. Smile and greet each customer?
3. Try to assist each customer in line regardless of whether or not the customer appears to need their assistance?
4. Move down the line to assist customers rather than waiting at the head of the queue?
5. Identify customer mailing needs?
6. Recommend the services that best meet the customer's needs?
7. If necessary, explain the features and benefits of our various services to assist customers in selecting a product or service?
8. Ensure that customers have the necessary forms and that they are properly completed?
9. Check to see if parcels are wrapped properly and help customers wrap packages to meet mailing requirements?

COMMENTS: _____

Lobby Director Evaluation

Observations of the Lobby Director in Action

Does the Lobby Director:

10. Provide retail products, i.e., padded bags, boxes etc., allowing customers to prepare their mailing before they reach the window?
11. Direct customers to vending machines and to any special service window, such as Stamps Only, Express Mail, or Pick-up?
12. Answer questions?
13. Approve checks?
14. Deliver vacation hold and accountable mail to customers in the lobby.
15. Handle inquires and complaints properly?
16. Accept changes of address, P.O. Box applications and request for vacation holds?
17. Is Lobby Director confident, comfortable, and in control (Customer/Lobby Director interaction)?
18. Demonstrate patience and courtesy and respect for our customers?
19. Up-sell postal products and services as value-added services to our customers?

COMMENTS: _____

Lobby Director Evaluation

Observations of the Lobby Director in Action

Does the Lobby Director:

- 20. Close each transaction by thanking the customer or telling them the next step, i.e., "the next available clerk will help you", etc?
- 21. Follow-up, if something remains unresolved, such as a complaint or inquiry?
- 22. Quickly return to serving customers at the window after assisting all the customers in the lobby?

General

- 1. Are substitutes available to relieve the primary director for lunch, breaks and to cover off days and leave?
- 2. Do the director and the clerks work well together as team?

COMMENTS: _____

Recommendations: _____

Action Taken: _____

