THE CUSTOMER IS RIGHT

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**ABSTRACT**

National Water Commission is the main provider of water and sewerage services in Jamaica. Some 70% of the population receives piped water through NWC operated systems while wastewater service is provided to about 25% of the population.

NWC’s vision is that “By the year 2005, NWC will become the preeminent utility in the Caribbean and Latin America and will be recognized as such by its employees, customers, competitors, investors and the general public. We will be the standard by which other utilities in the region are judged in terms of superior service, efficiency, profitability, integrity, innovation and teamwork.”
One of the critical areas that NWC has made a determined effort to address is customer service delivery. Up to 1999, of the three major utilities operating in Jamaica (NWC, Jamaica Public Service Company Limited and Cable and Wireless Jamaica Limited), NWC had the lowest customer service rating, according to reports of the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR). In 1999, the Water and Sewerage sector recorded the highest number of complaints of all utility companies with 47% of the total number reported to the OUR. This was primarily because the organization was not customer focused in its structure, systems or culture, even though there was a 26% decrease in the number of complaints recorded for the Water and Sewerage sector.

NWC has taken various initiatives have to address this issue, with significant success - to the extent that NWC has become and has remained in the Number 1 position of being ‘the least complained against’ utility service provider monitored by the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) over the last 30 months.

According to the OUR’s quarterly performance report for January to March 2003, the NWC was not only the least complained against utility but also recorded a “commendable” reduction in its share of complaints.

The paper explores some of the programs and activities undertaken by NWC over the last two years to improve customer satisfaction and corporate image. These included the commitment of scarce resources to customer service training, business policy commitments, maintenance of toll-free telephone contacts, a wider range of payment options infrastructure expansion, pump replacement projects, customer metering programme and other improvement projects that strengthened our ability to serve our customers.