

# 2011 VACo Achievement Award Submittal

Category: Customer Service

## Outstanding Customer Service for Prospective Employees

A Collaboration among James City County, City of Williamsburg and York County  
Regional Population 100,000+  
June 1, 2011



Live. **Work.** Enjoy.  
*In America's Historic Triangle.*

Live.	<b>Working in America's Historic Triangle</b>
Work.	The Historic Triangle is a great place to do business.
Enjoy.	There are a variety of employment opportunities in Greater Williamsburg.
Home.	In greater Williamsburg per capita income exceeds that of the US and Virginia at approximately \$42,000. Current job listings are below:



- [Busch Gardens Williamsburg](#)
- [City of Williamsburg](#)
- [College of William & Mary](#)
- [Colonial Williamsburg](#)
- [Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance Job Bank](#)
- [James City County](#)
- [Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation](#)
- [Kingsmill Resort](#)
- [York County](#)

# Outstanding Customer Service for Prospective Employees

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## Overview

While local governments recognize the importance of providing outstanding service for both citizens and their own employees, an equally vital customer, yet often overlooked, is the job applicant or prospective employee. Given the widespread challenge of attracting a highly qualified workforce, providing outstanding customer service for prospective employees is imperative, especially as we emerge from these difficult economic conditions.

“Providing Outstanding Customer Service for Prospective Employees” is noteworthy for both its achievements and how they were accomplished:

- It brought together human resource directors from regional public and private sector organizations to share expertise, experience and best practices to meet the area’s evolving business needs
- It addressed previously unmet needs of prospective employees for a central source of information about jobs and relocation opportunities, and educational, recreational and entertainment amenities
- It developed and implemented a successful shared services model that expanded and improved customer service at a lower cost ([www.williamsburgworks.com](http://www.williamsburgworks.com))

As a result, James City County, the City of Williamsburg, and York County, along with its partners, are now able to provide outstanding customer service to prospective employees in an appealing way that is efficient and effective, with easy access to resources that will aid them in deciding to live, enjoy and work in this area.

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## The Challenge

Today, organizations across all sectors are faced with the challenge of attracting a qualified workforce. Public sector organizations are especially vulnerable due to the increasing number of projected retirements as baby boomers leave the workplace. To make matters worse, the talent exodus is taking place at the same time local governments are experiencing budget shortfalls, which makes it increasingly difficult to compete for talent.

Providing outstanding customer service for prospective employees presents unique challenges because job seekers begin as external customers and, if hired, transition to internal customers. In addition, prospective employees are both omnipresent and elusive. Although organizations may never see or hear from them, they are still key customers. And, while residents may not be able to choose where to pay their taxes, prospective employees can certainly choose where to work and live.

The surge in the use of the internet has dramatically shifted the way prospective employees find out information and form impressions about organizations. To be competitive, local governments need to be at the forefront of technology. The 2010 Pew Internet & American Life Project Tracking survey reports 54% of users look online for information about a job. According to Braddy, Meade and Kroustalis (2005), there is a direct relationship between a job seeker's perception of a hiring organization and its recruitment website.

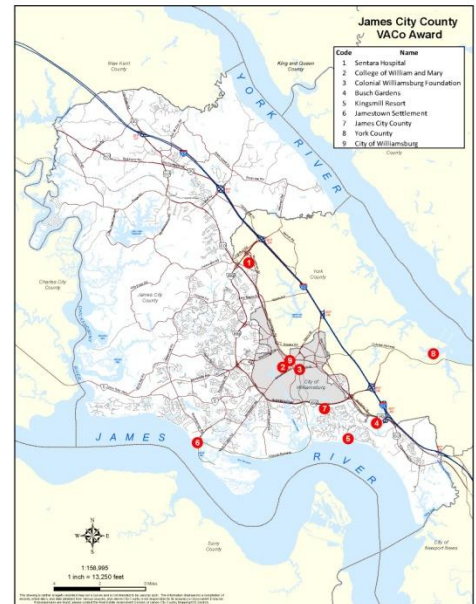
Finally, research conducted by Rebecca Ryan, Next Generation Consulting, and author of *Live First, Work Second*, underscores the trend that young professionals, an important demographic we are trying to reach, select employment based on preferred location. This is especially significant because efforts to recruit talent will be undermined if young professionals have negative perceptions about an area's quality of life.

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## The Approach

Working collaboratively is nothing new in the Historic Triangle area of Virginia. In September 2009, Human Resource Directors from James City County, the City of Williamsburg, and York County as well as Busch Gardens & Water Country, USA, College of William and Mary, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Jamestown Yorktown Foundation, Kingsmill Resort & Spa, and Sentara Hospital, in conjunction with the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance and Historic Triangle Collaborative, met to share expertise, experience and best practices on topics to meet the area's evolving business needs. The issue that ascended was talent recruitment.



As a first step, partners compiled and compared current information provided to and for prospective employees. The duplication of efforts going towards assembling and sending materials or links to websites became apparent quickly.

Not only was it a time-consuming task for staff, the quality of information provided was inconsistent and more focused on marketing the area as a tourism destination rather than a place to live and work.

Recognizing the need to develop an online presence geared to prospective employees and the value of pooling resources and talents, partners began working on a regional website that was welcoming, easy to navigate, and with changing images of working people depicting a vibrant life-style. While other regions may have generalized economic development or marketing sites, because this

*Given the successful collaboration among local governments during America's 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, I was optimistic about what we would accomplish.*

*Carol M. Luckam  
Human Resource Manager  
James City County*

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project was initiated and accomplished by human resource directors, it was tailored to meet the needs of prospective employees. Partners wrote and edited text, selected images, and most importantly, created an overall branding that reflected the uniqueness of this area.

The result is [www.williamsburgworks.com](http://www.williamsburgworks.com), a one-stop portal to information and resources of interest to prospective employees with emphasis on job and relocation opportunities.

There are three sections – “Live”, “Enjoy” and “Work.” Information under two of the three sections – “live” and “enjoy” – is maintained by the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance, shared by all partners, and includes information about institutions and services such as education, healthcare, public safety, transportation and real estate; cost of living and climate data, as well as overviews of the wide range of cultural, recreational and entertainment experiences available in the Historic Triangle.

Under the third section – “work” -- each respective partner maintains organization-specific recruitment information. There are reciprocal links to and from the section.

Since launching in April 2010, response has been extremely positive. The site receives an average of 600 visits a month.

It is important to note that this effort signifies more than a website. Partners already had their respective websites in place. Adopting a shared services model maximized resources

*One website, with one message for the region, will allow HR professionals in the Historic Triangle to more effectively recruit quality employees.*

*Deborah Jarvis  
Human Resources Director  
Jamestown-Yorktown  
Foundation*

*The Alliance is pleased to support this inclusive online initiative to promote Greater Williamsburg as a great place to live and to work.*

*Richard Schreiber,  
President/CEO  
Greater Williamsburg  
Chamber & Tourism  
Alliance*

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but also resulted in a change in philosophy towards prospective employees and the relationship to regional economic health.

The main investment was time. Purchasing the domain name was less than \$20.00. Fortunately, the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance already had a webmaster and agreed to host the parent site.

### **The Outcome**

According to a 2009 survey by Deloitte titled *Shared Services Shine in Challenging Times*, the top 3 rewards for adopting a shared services model are 1) Reduce Cost, 2) Improve Process, and 3) Increase Customer Satisfaction.

For James City County, City of Williamsburg and York County, rewards include:

1. Reduced cost through eliminating duplication of efforts
2. Reallocated resources previously dedicated to compiling and mailing information to items that added more value
3. Improved process by having both an enhanced site and twice the web presence
4. Greater customer satisfaction by having information available 24/7 for a previously overlooked customer base

For customers, outcomes include:

1. More information
2. More current/accurate information
3. Less time and effort to find information

This model can easily be replicated in other communities once you realize the mutual benefit of working together to attract prospective employees to your area and your organization.