

# THE FOREST SERVICE . . . .

Becoming a better agency to do business with.



A report to our timber sale customers on how we are changing our business practices and improving service

# A Customer Focus...

As timber sale contractors, you are a vital part of our delivery system to provide environmentally managed resources to the American people. We've enjoyed a close relationship for a long time. Sustaining an effective partnership is very important to us.

The business of purchasing timber from the Forest Service—sale layout, bidding,

contracting, and administration—is very complex with lots of rules, regulations, and bureaucracy to contend with. While operationally, we often have little latitude with laws, budgets, and national policies, we *will* make our business processes and internal management practices more efficient and customer friendly for you.

## We're Listening

Becoming more customer friendly begins by listening to you. The difference between talking about it and actually doing it is measured by whether customers see change in our actions.

We began listening to you by convening focus groups of contractors and purchasers

in Boise, Idaho, and in Warren, Pennsylvania. A questionnaire was designed from these discussions, with survey questions relating to all phases of the timber contracting business. To ensure objectivity, a private sector marketing consultant conducted the survey on eight national forests across the country.

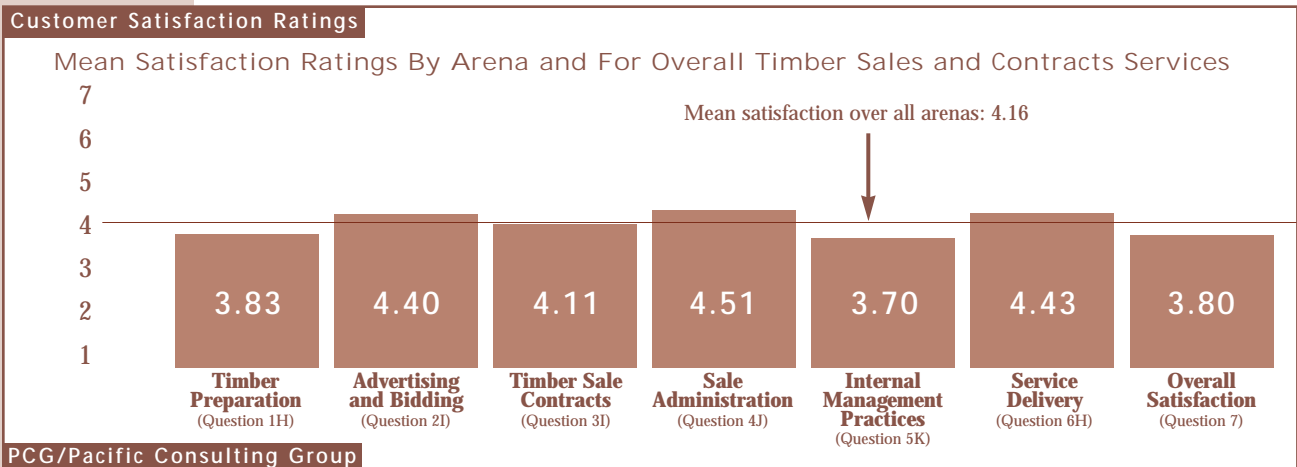
### 1. **Timber Preparation.** These statements apply to Forest Service Timber Sales and Contracts in the area of timber preparation

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
a. The Forest Service appraisal process provides an accurate value for timber.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. I find the Forest Service's volume estimates are accurate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Sales are sized to provide opportunities for a range of buyers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. There are sales provided in the size I can bid for.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Sale layout provides for access for designated timber.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Boundaries are marked accurately and consistently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Tree marking is easy to see and understand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. Taking everything into account, I am satisfied with Forest Service performance in timber preparation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

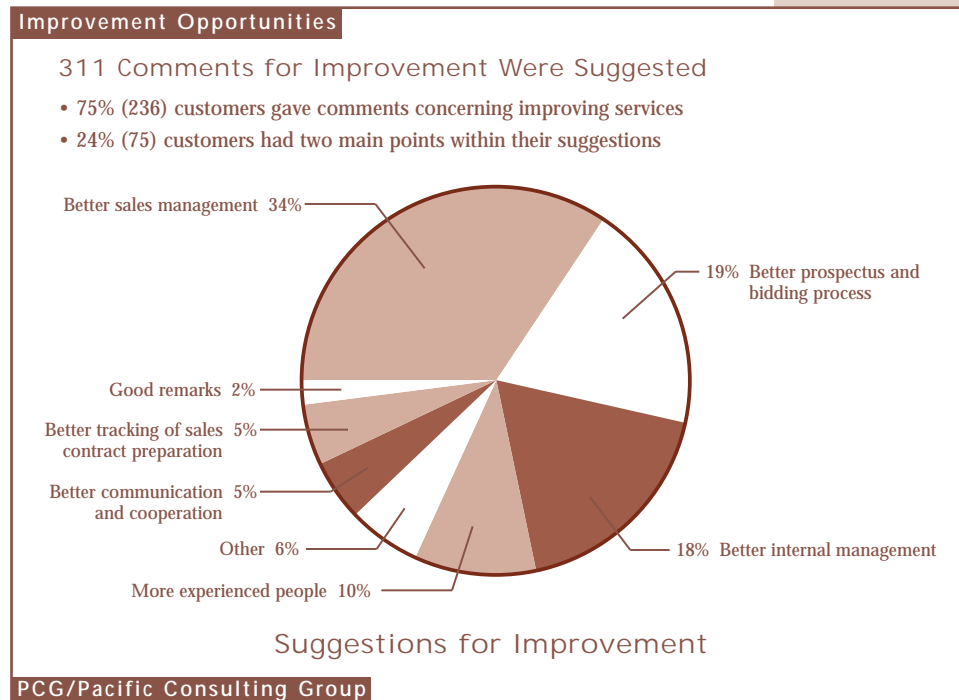
## What You Told Us

Survey results told us you are not satisfied with the way we do business. An "average" rating for surveys of this type is 5.0. On a

scale of 1 to 7, you rated the Forest Service between 3.7 and 4.5—below average in customer satisfaction across the board.



You also offered specific suggestions for improvement:



## We're Changing...

We've got a lot of work to do to improve your level of satisfaction with us. We know you want frank answers and real solutions. Since this survey was completed in March 1997, we have conducted action planning

sessions at each surveyed forest and are implementing changes Service-wide where local conditions and opportunities allow. Here are some of the changes.

**You told us we need to improve our sales management, so we are**

- Inviting industry to workshops to discuss volume determination and cruising methodology.
- Working with other government agencies to provide a more even flow of timber to contractors.
- Designing smaller sales.

**You told us we need to improve our prospectus and bidding process, so we are**

- Providing more specific information in our sale prospectus.
- Offering you training on completing bid forms.

**You told us we should streamline and improve the accuracy of contract preparation, so we are**

- Identifying negotiable elements in the sale contract.
- Including a performance standard for clerks and sales administrators for meeting deadlines of contract closures.

**You told us we need more people with timber sale expertise, so we are**

- Upgrading and retaining technical personnel, and filling some vacancies.

## You told us we need to improve our financial management practices, so we are

- Ensuring timely application of purchaser credits.
- Providing faster acceptance and release of payment units, surety bonds, and letters of credit.

## You told us you need better communication and faster decisions, so we are

- Ensuring that our personnel use all authorities available to speed up decisions.
- Revising offering schedules to provide more convenience and opportunity to purchasers.
- Holding regular listening sessions to share information, listen to concerns, and identify possible changes to improve our business processes and provide better customer service.



## And We Intend To Keep At It

These changes are just the beginning. We know that they don't resolve all of your problems, but they are a start. Our aim is to steadily improve our service in ways that

reduce your costs and improve our capability as partners to get the job done. This is a continuous process for both of us, and we're committed to it.

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