



# Award Winner 1997

## ACCESS Investor Services, Inc.

ACCESS Investor Services, Inc., a subsidiary of Van Kampen American Capital, Inc. (located in both Oakbrooke, IL and Houston, TX), is the exclusive transfer agent for the Van Kampen American Capital and Morgan Stanley Family of Funds. These fund families offer more than 50 stock, bond, money market, and global funds with \$50 million in assets under supervision and management. Investment professionals across the nation distribute the funds to individual investors.

Competing in a \$4.2 trillion international market, ACCESS' 270 employees process financial and nonfinancial transactions, track customer exception items, maintain distributor relationships, process corporate action, control statements and shareholder media and maintain data and system integrity. In 1996, ACCESS processed over 2.3 million transactions and maintained key service relationships with over 400 top distributors' operation groups.

At ACCESS, Service is our *ONLY* product. We do it *RIGHT!* We do it *RIGHT NOW!* This is more than just a mission statement; it is a way of conducting business. The mission heavily draws on participatory leadership, coordinated planning and execution, thorough information gathering, and a trained workforce that puts the customer first at all times.



## VAN KAMPEN AMERICAN CAPITAL

ACCESS INVESTOR SERVICES, INC.

Providing service "right" and "right now" not only means conducting customer transactions according to their instructions, but also creating an environment in which employees have the culture and tools behind them to meet this high standard. ACCESS has built a simple foundation that supports each of its employees; those cultural building blocks are:

- Key Principles
- Key Business Drivers
- Basic Beliefs
- Teams and Continuous Improvement

Key Principles are the guidelines for interactions between employees and also guide the delivery of service to our customers. Those principles are 1) Maintain or enhance self-esteem, 2) Listen and respond with empathy, 3) Ask for help and encourage involvement. Each employee receives training on these principles and how to apply them in their work lives. Additionally, each employee's performance is reviewed to provide feedback regarding his or her proficiency in applying these critical interaction skills.

To be a successful transfer agent, ACCESS must manage the following Key Business Drivers: 1) Customer Satisfaction, 2) Human Resources, 3) Superior Processing, 4) First Call Satisfaction, and 5) Controls and Efficiencies. These drivers are the basis for measurement systems. Results of these measurable systems are widely distributed to company employees through the Corporate Performance Report and other channels.

The Basic Beliefs (or value system) illustrate the culture of ACCESS. The Beliefs embody respect for employees and customers and include: placing value on diversity, realizing that quality is the responsibility of each employee, believing that anything can be improved, knowing that teams and personal involvement is critical to our success and understanding the person doing the job knows it best. Again, each employee receives information and performance reinforcement to further the culture.

The application of these cultural building blocks is best represented by ACCESS' Quality Commitment teams and their continuous improvement efforts. All employees are organized in quality teams—in conjunction with their natural work unit—and customer needs drive the quality initiatives. Teams create, self-certify, and implement ideas. The criteria for self-certification is two pronged; the idea must focus on the customer and it must have been created using the participation of the team. As teams progress, there is a reward and recognition component based on a point system. For the certification and implementation of an idea, the team receives one point. For each \$1,000 saved, the team receives an additional point.

Continuous improvement is the driving force for teams. Applying statistical, fact-based management, ACCESS is able to recognize problems that could impede progress toward meeting quality and customer satisfaction. Information derived from a

variety of sources, including customer surveys, external audits, product and service inspection, cost analysis, formal customer inquiry data, and informal feedback is used to track satisfaction and internal processes. Information also includes the feedback from the Missouri Quality Award process.

In 1993, ACCESS Investor Services, Inc. (formerly American Capital Companies Shareholder Services, Inc.) won the Missouri Quality Award. The Award process yielded a feedback report that detailed the strengths and areas for improvement for ACCESS that became a catalyst for improvement efforts. Four years later, it was time to re-evaluate the organization's progress by submitting a new application. The feedback report from the 1997 award process will be an invaluable input into our continuous improvement and strategic planning efforts.

ACCESS' culture is built around its employees, the service that is provided to its customers and a sincere commitment to continuous improvement. Yet, continuous improvement is a journey, not a destination and so our journey continues.

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