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CPM Project: STREAMLINE THE ADMINISTRATIVE
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR THE CENTER FOR
EDUCATION, QUALITY AND ASSESSMENT

by

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The Center for Education, Quality and Assessment (CEQA) offers training courses in management and Total Quality, plus provides two certificate programs in supervision and management. Additionally, CEQA provides consultation in quality improvement and strategic planning.

The training courses and programs CEQA offers are maintained through an electronic system, File Maker Pro, plus a manual hard copy filing system. These systems were established in 1991 to accommodate the record keeping for participants in CEQA's training courses to record training activity. As participation in the two certificate programs-Associate Public Manager (APM) and Certified Public Manager (CPM)-increased, the system was enhanced to accommodate reporting needs required by the National Certified Public Manager accrediting body.

During the development of the CPM program, curriculum was created, policies were written, and procedures were established to control the applicant process. Concurrent to these vast and complex projects, CEQA continued to provide management and Total Quality courses to employees and agencies within the State system. The number of records maintained for open-enrollment (open to anyone) and sale-of-service (exclusive to a contracting agency) courses far outweighed the number of APM and CPM candidates. As the demand for CEQA services increased and records maintenance became more complex, the information management system was adjusted to meet the increased demand. However, it was becoming evident that File Maker Pro and time consuming procedures would eventually crumble under CEQA's growth.

Author's note: This report was written in the spirit of Total Quality Management philosophy with a focus on methods to improve the process. This report was *not* written to place blame or harp on past decisions; those attempts are unproductive and hamper improvement efforts.

Problem statement

The initial process designed to track candidates was rather simple. File Maker Pro handled the load with ease. As customer demands increased, it became necessary to provide a variety of reports. Some might argue that the APM/CPM programs dominated all other systems. After considerable investigation and thought, it became obvious that File Maker Pro simply was unable to comply with customer requests primarily from the APM/CPM programs rendering broader application unconscionable. While trying to provide information for the APM/CPM candidates, other course attendees were neglected. With limited resources available, attempts were made to fix immediate problems.

The "Band-Aid" approach to quality improvement does not work in the long run. The current information management system in CEQA does not meet the needs of all internal and external customer groups. Part of the plan that was developed to upgrade all computer systems for the Office of Human Resources, in which CEQA resides, includes new software that could provide functions that compile and track all CEQA course attendee information. Now is the time to prepare for future CEQA growth by streamlining the information management system process and maximize current opportunities to improve the quality of service to the customer.

The records

This project will focus only on opportunities to improve the processes surrounding the needs of customers attending CEQA courses and certificate programs. Customer is defined as a participant in open-enrollment or sale-of-service core course attended for professional interest or APM/CPM credit. There are three sets of numbers that will be referenced in the following section: electronic ad hoc, APM candidates, and CPM candidates.

There are approximately 7,829 electronic ad hoc records maintained in File Maker Pro for participants who have attended one or more of CEQA's courses. This

number is not representative of people, but of attendance in a course. In other words, one person may have attended five courses, thus having five records. Attachment A shows the projected growth for CEQA's records.

Of the 7,829 electronic records CEQA maintains, no one knows how many people this represents. These people receive no information from CEQA regarding their training progress. Likewise, their agency receives no information regarding the number of employees that have attended CEQA courses.

In order to obtain a figure of potential customers, the electronic records number must be converted to participant records. This would show the growth rate for non APM/CPM candidates attending CEQA courses. The tedious process of assigning 7,829 records to a person will take many man-hours. This conversion is currently in process as a result of the preliminary investigation from this project. There is an assumption that the number of participants who take CEQA courses ad hoc would be more than the number of APM candidates on file.

There are approximately 345 APM candidates and 45 CPM candidates for whom course requirements are monitored for compliance with National Certified Public Manager Consortium policies. Attachment B shows the growth for APM.

Any report that CEQA provides to customers electronically must be checked manually for accuracy. All of the planning CEQA performs is compiled manually and is extremely time consuming. Currently, only APM/CPM information is compiled and provided to the candidate and the agency.

Customer needs, objectives, and measures

An important item that emerged from a recent CEQA customer service survey was that many supervisors and managers in state government were unaware that management and Total Quality training was available to them by a State entity. As CEQA moves to increase its marketing efforts, there is an assumption that attendance in CEQA courses will also increase. Determining what that potential growth might be is

only one piece of information. Additionally, specific information is needed from the large pool of participants that states what they would like CEQA to provide them. For example, a training organization should provide a training record to anyone who requests one. The agency may want to know the training status of all of their employees. In order to verify these assumptions, CEQA needs to obtain additional customer information. Over the next year, this project proposes a questionnaire or focus group be developed and offered to participants in open-enrollment and sale-of-service courses who are not enrolled in APM or CPM.

Objective: Develop and administer a customer service needs assessment tool.

Measure: Analyze the data obtained from the customers service needs assessment tool through either quantitative or qualitative measures as appropriate.

Objective: Identify and test opportunities to streamline the processes based on customer needs.

Measure: Analyze the data through either quantitative or qualitative measures as appropriate.

Objective: Select training management software that meets immediate information needs and prepares for future requirements.

Measure: Prior to purchasing new software, test several packages and compare to criteria developed based on current and projected needs.

Customer requests from APM and CPM candidates has been fairly consistent over the past year.

- The training report that is sent to only candidates is hard to read.
- It takes too long to get training record information.
- They want to know what courses are needed.
- They would like to have updated training records more often.
- There is misunderstanding about the application process into APM/CPM.
- They would like to know if their elective credits were accepted.

- An E-mail address has been requested to submit applications, elective credit forms, and registration forms via the internet.

CEQA would benefit by requesting APM and CPM candidates to fill out the same questionnaire as open-enrollment and sale-of-service participants. While obtaining customer data, flow chart diagrams for the three primary processes can be analyzed.

There are three primary internal problems that CEQA is currently experiencing regarding any customers participation.

Problem: There are two CEQA staff and three administrative staff who have access to File Maker Pro. Only one of these employees acts as advisor to APM/CPM candidates.

Effect: Customers wait sometimes days to receive information on their training report.

Problem: The number of hard copy files being maintained is growing at a rapid rate.

Effect: CEQA will run out of storage space to house bulky files.

Problem: Response time to customers enrolling in APM and submitting elective credit forms is lengthy.

Effect: Customers wonder what their status is, which lead to anxiety and frustration with CEQA.

Problem: Obtaining customer information is generally done manually. Any use of File Maker Pro must be manually checked for correctness.

Effect: The customer waits long periods of time for information. Those involved with the dissemination of information spend many man-hours manually working with records.

Objective: Identify electronic and manual ways to provide quicker customer response to training report information.

Measure: Develop control charts to measure customer response time.

Objective: Select an alternative hard copy filing method that complies with National CPM Consortium requirements.

Measure: Implement and test the system for feasibility.

Objective: Brainstorm alternative to streamline the application and enrollment processes for APM.

Measure: Implement the best choice and develop control charts to measure response time.

Objective: Allow everyone access to electronic training information.

Measure: Qualitatively measure the results.

The current administrative management system

The administrative management system is the method of tracking and maintaining records on CEQA's customers. Of the three processes, open-enrollment and sale-of-service are the simplest. The APM/CPM process is very complex due to the requirements for record keeping encumbered by the National CPM Consortium

Open-enrollment customers enter the system when they contact a CEQA representative for training. Class participants enroll by sending CEQA a registration form which is entered into File Maker Pro and then filed in a hard copy folder. A confirmation letter is sent and the participant attends the course. Upon completion of the course, the attendance records are checked against projected attendees and the participants who did not complete the course are removed from File Maker Pro.

When an agency chooses to utilize CEQA's services, also known as sale-of-service, the CEQA representative works with the sale-of-service coordinator who finalizes the agency contract. Once a contract is signed and a course scheduled, participants attend the course, an attendance roster is created and verified and the participant information is entered into File Maker Pro. Other than the class roster, no other hard copy records are maintained for non APM/CPM candidates. Flow charts for these two processes can be found on attachment C.

Individuals who are interested in the APM program may or may not have attended courses previously with CEQA. In order to identify APM candidates and establish a personalized record for each, they must send in an APM application. Upon receipt of the application, an acceptance announcement is generated, elective credits are reviewed, a hard copy file is established, and the APM code is applied in File Maker Pro. APM candidates send in registrations through open-enrollment, attend the course, and training hours earned are entered into File Maker Pro. Meanwhile, the candidate submits elective

credits for review; once the elective credit is approved, the information is entered into File Maker Pro and the hard copy is filed.

Records for APM candidates are reviewed quarterly and upon completion of program requirements a certificate is generated. From this point, candidates with their agency's nomination may apply to the CPM program. At which point, another application is submitted and coded in File Maker Pro. The process is about the same as that of an APM candidate with the exception of the formal assignment of an advisor and the creation of a training plan. This CEQA staff member tracks the CPM candidates progress to assure accuracy of potential graduates for any given year. A flow chart diagram for the APM/CPM process can be found on attachment D.

Existing process improvement methods

In order to get a handle on the actual number of people attending CEQA open-enrollment and sale-of-service training courses, a print code indicator needs to be established that creates a file for individuals who are not in APM or CPM. This would provide a file for each person rather than having one person show up in several different courses. When a person takes advantage of CEQA service for the first time, he/she would automatically have a file established.

A postcard has already been created to replace the acceptance letter process. The advantages of a postcard are that the address can be handwritten on the card; therefore, deleting the need to prepare an envelope.

Elective credits are handled for APM and CPM candidates. Often times the information sent into CEQA by the candidate is incomplete. This requires additional time looking up the information. Passing some of the responsibility on to another CEQA member would assist in the turn around time

Possible electronic process improvement

Although formal customer feedback has not yet been obtained, there are opportunities to electronically update the information management system when the new

computer equipment arrives. To streamline the information management system, CEQA would need upgraded hardware and software, access to the internet, and some type of imaging system.

Upgraded hardware and software is needed to handle the increased attendance CEQA is experiencing. There is a major concern that File Maker Pro will no longer be able to accept more records and that adding additional memory is a "Band-Aid" approach. With the rapid expansion of technological improvement, there are now training software packages available to handle training department functions. Upgraded IBM based hardware is needed to run the software. A search for the most appropriate software training package is in progress.

Suggested criteria for new software used for training management:

- Provide complete records on any CEQA attendee.
- Reports be easy to read through the use of a template that shows what courses were taken and which are needed. This would apply to credentials or customized training programs, i.e., General Services quality series.
- Provide agencies complete training updates for their employees attending CEQA training.
- At a glance, know the number of participants in a course, the course location, and the course instructor.
- Be available to everyone in CEQA. Allow for data manipulation by providing access to only those that need it.
- Be reliable.
- Provide information used to project participant attendance for future planning.

A CEQA homepage can be developed that incorporates templates for course registrations, APM applications, and elective credit forms. An interested participant could fill in the form, electronically, and send it to CEQA via E-mail. The E-mail system

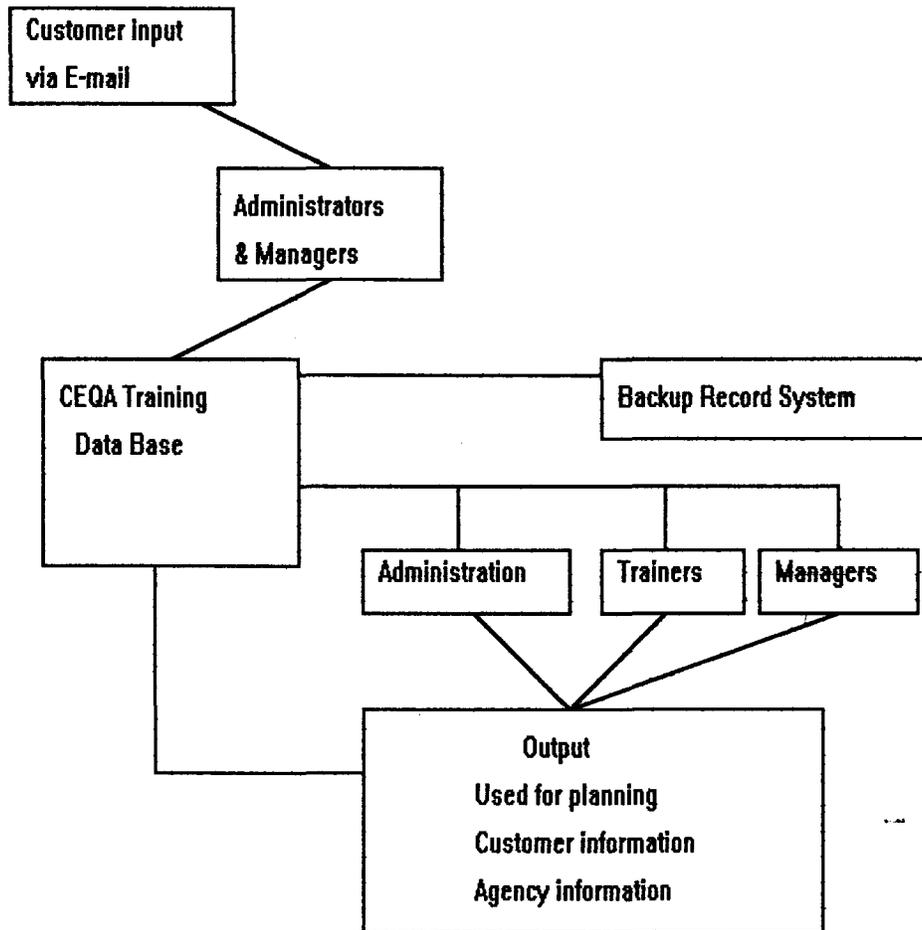
could be structured to automatically send out an acceptance notice for the APM application and file the copy electronically using a backup method, thus eliminating the need to maintain hard copy files. Then as elective credit forms are received and approved by CEQA, a response can be transmitted electronically to the candidate and the form filed with the application, compiling a complete file.

Registration forms could be handled in the same fashion. Via electronic applications, forms would be received and held in electronic class folders until three weeks before the course when a confirmation notice would be sent to the participant. The confirmation notice would be sent electronically using E-mail. Copies of all correspondence would be maintained in the class file folder which would be similar to the backup method currently used. Thus, eliminating again the need to maintain hard copy files. Contracts would be handled in the same fashion.

If more than five people had access to the files, it would save processing time because the person needing the information would not have to go to someone else to get the information. This would be an additional benefit to the customer; currently they have to wait for 10 minutes or longer while someone can access the system. If no one is available they may have to wait several days. If the appropriate people had access, then they could answer the questions from their desk.

Generally people are resistant to filing information electronically for fear that it will disappear and never be retrieved. That is why it would be essential that the filing method be apart from the regular network.

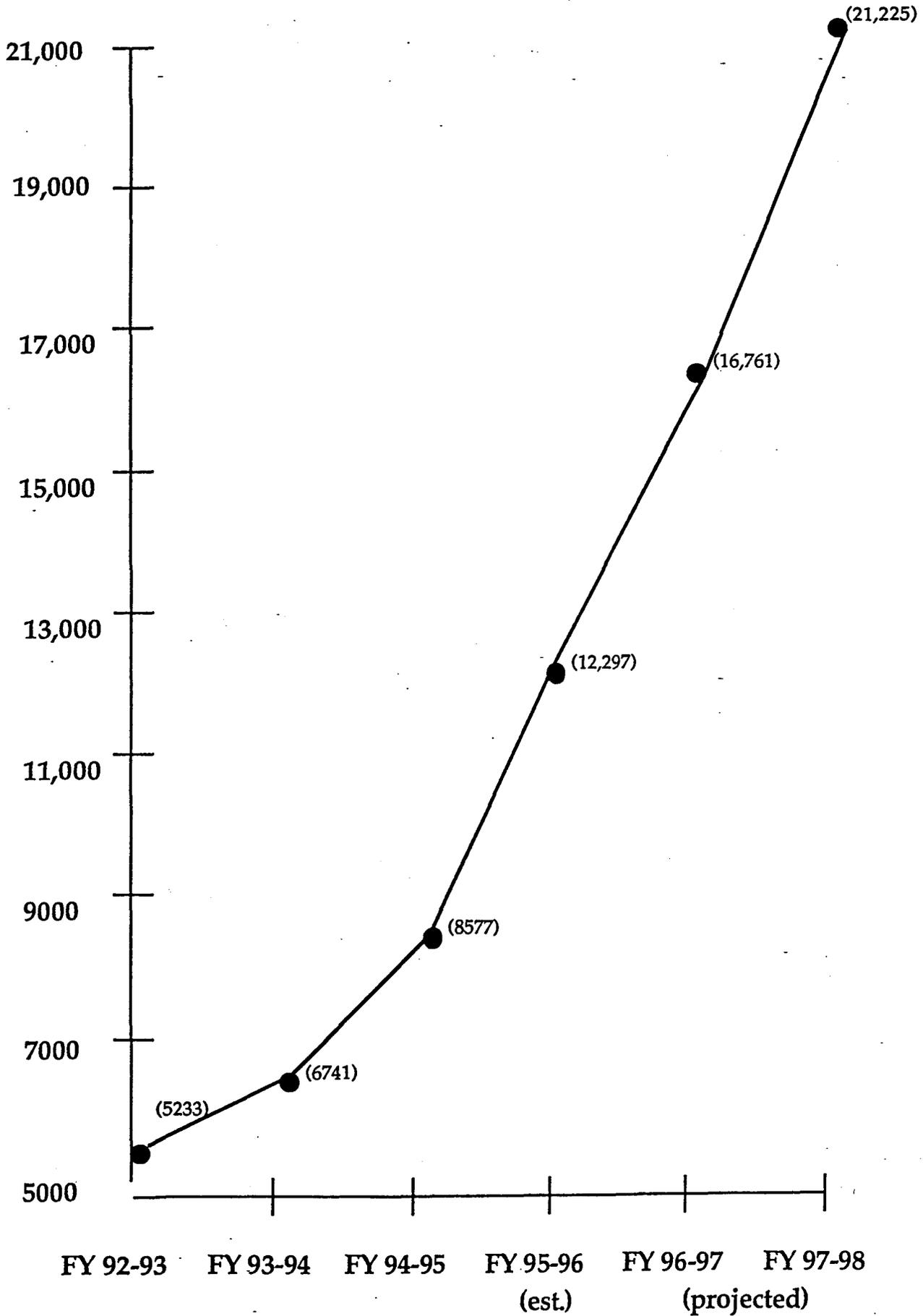
A barrier to this process is for those participants who do not have internet connections. In this case hard copy documents would be received in CEQA. If CEQA could fight the urge to maintain the hard copy document, the document would be scanned and placed in the filing system. Eliminating again the need to maintain hard copy files. See the following graph explaining the proposed electronic method.



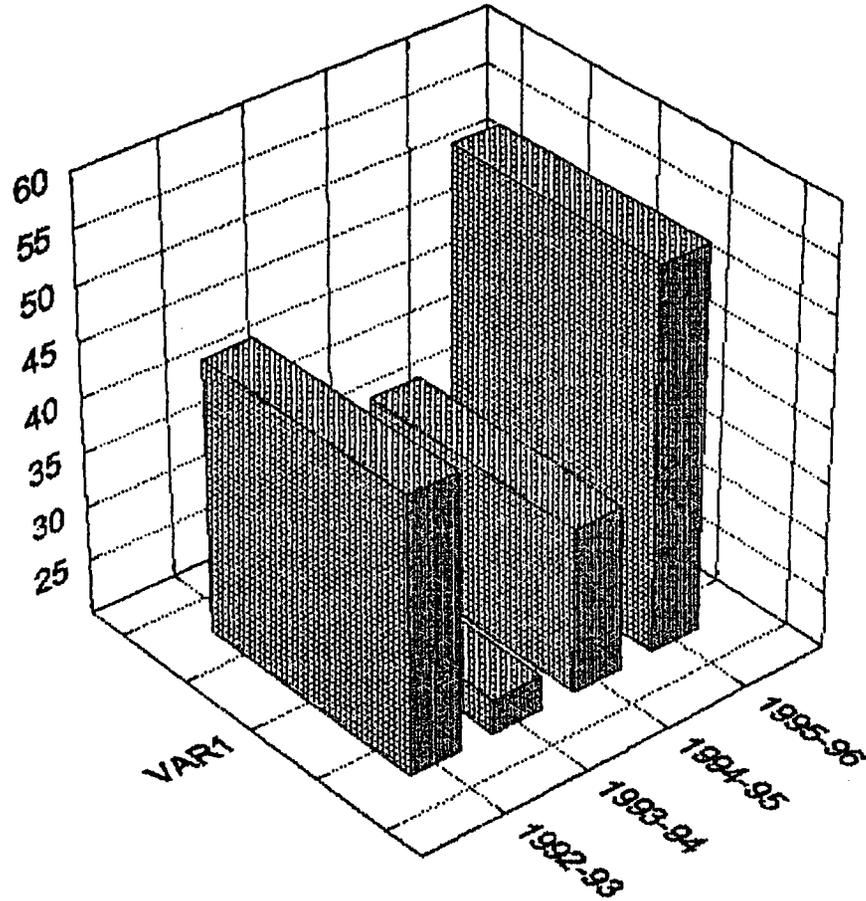
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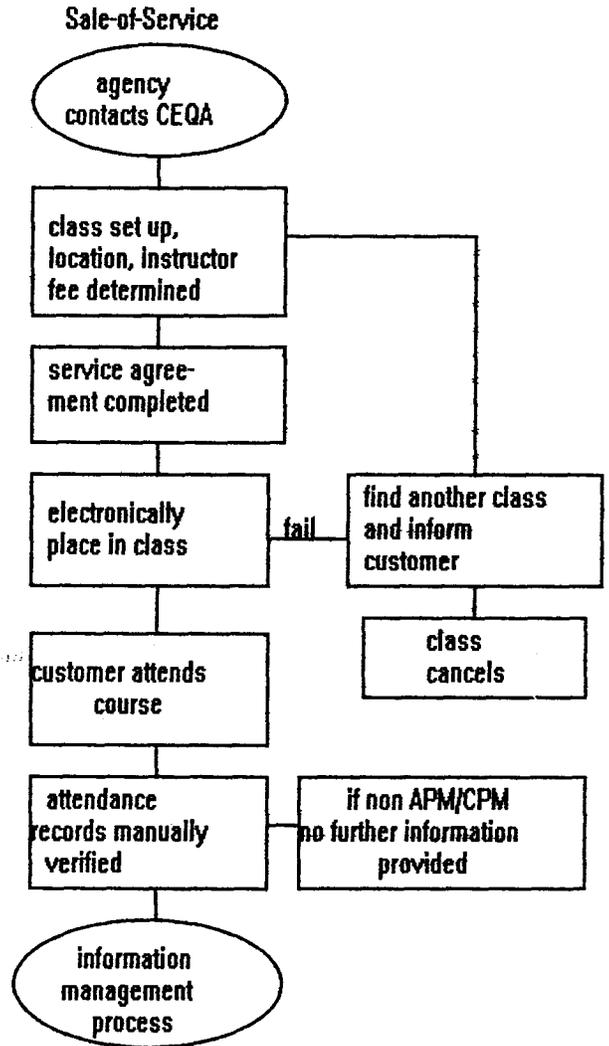
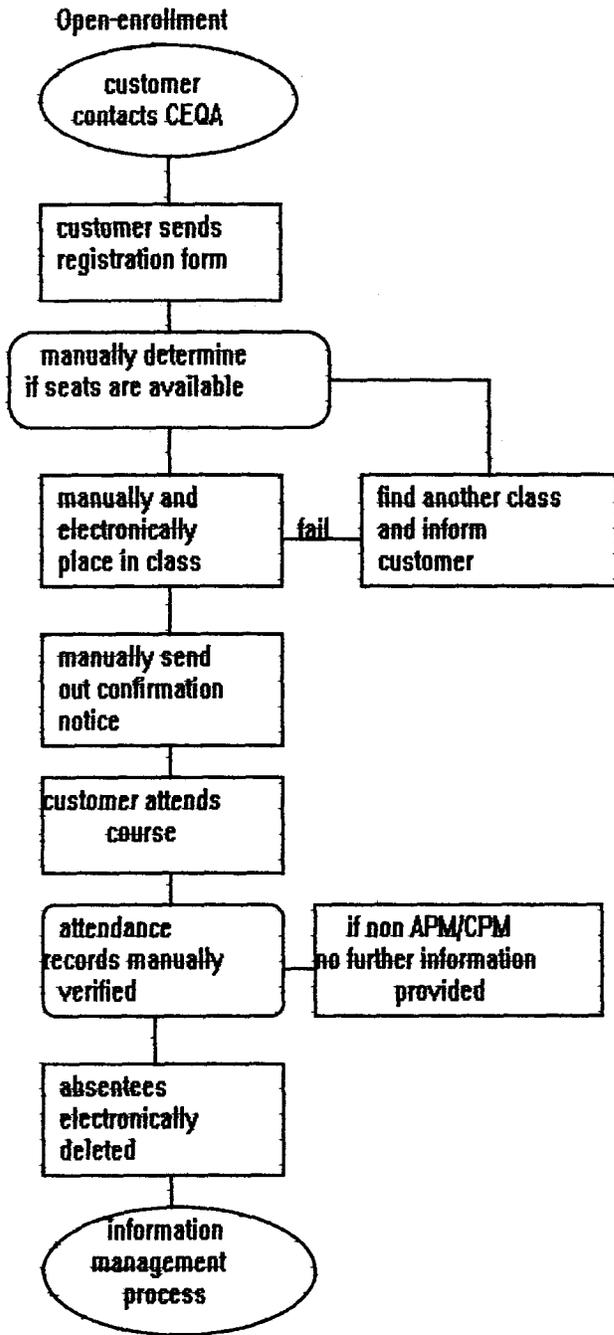
This is a very exciting opportunity to measure and improve CEQA's information management system and align them further with customer needs. The next year will be spent developing and implementing assessment tools as appropriate. Once the new computer equipment is ordered and installed, pilot programs designed to transition from manual systems to electronic systems can be measured for efficiency. New training program management software will also be purchased and installed. In 1998, Cheryl Payne will focus her CPM project in concert with this project and report improvement areas and identify opportunities for change.

Growth of Records in CEQA Database



3D Sequential Graph (APM, STA 1v*4c)





APM and CPM process (approx. 290 candidates)

