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EXECUTIVE INSIGHTS WITH **Janelle Allison**

CHIEF SERVICE DELIVERY OFFICER,
GREAT PLAINS COMMUNICATIONS (GPC)



West 8th St

EXECUTIVE Janelle

Janelle visits the GPC Operations Team members and collaborates on-site.



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LIVE INSIGHTS WITH

Janelle Allison

Chief Service Delivery Officer,
Great Plains Communications (GPC)

BY SHARON VOLLMAN

As Chief Service Delivery Officer, Janelle is responsible for Customer Service, the NOC, Service Operations and Project Management at GPC.

Janelle's approach aligns with a great quote by Peter Drucker, a well-known writer on business management theory and practice. He once said, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast," meaning that while a well-crafted strategy is essential, a customer-centric culture truly drives success. As a positive leader, Janelle practices that theory, knowing the best business plans can falter without the right culture.

Learn how she cultivates a culture where empathy, responsiveness, and collaboration thrive—enabling her team to follow proven strategies, exceed customer expectations, and ensure long-term loyalty and sustained business growth.

TOPIC: Evolving Expectations

ISE: How have customer expectations changed since the internet became a vital utility for home and business?

Janelle Allison: The internet has become a utility that is as vital as electricity, water, and gas. Customers need bandwidth for everything they do daily, whether banking, online learning, telehealth, running a business or staying connected to the world around them. It allows them to live where they want and work in the profession they desire, even remotely. The rising dependence on the internet, in turn, requires a robust and consistent connection—always on to meet customer needs and expectations.



Internet providers must deliver an outstanding customer experience, including high speed, reliability, and knowledgeable support. We realize that not every customer can fit into a box. We need to think outside the box to meet them where they are. That is what first-class customer experience is all about.

TOPIC: Transforming Best Practices

ISE: How has GPC evolved its customer service practices to help keep up with these changing customer expectations?

Allison: GPC has customers in densely populated areas and some of the most remote locations in the Midwest. We are a 114-year-old company that started by providing telephones to some of the most remote locations in Nebraska and Indiana. We continue to build fiber out to rural locations in partnership with the available state and federal government programs. We have expanded our reach to urban markets to bring all customers, regardless of location, the bandwidth and services that provide access to top-tier technology and connectivity.

Additionally, customers want to have options for signing up for services. Some want to enroll online without human interaction, while others still want to call and talk to someone who can guide

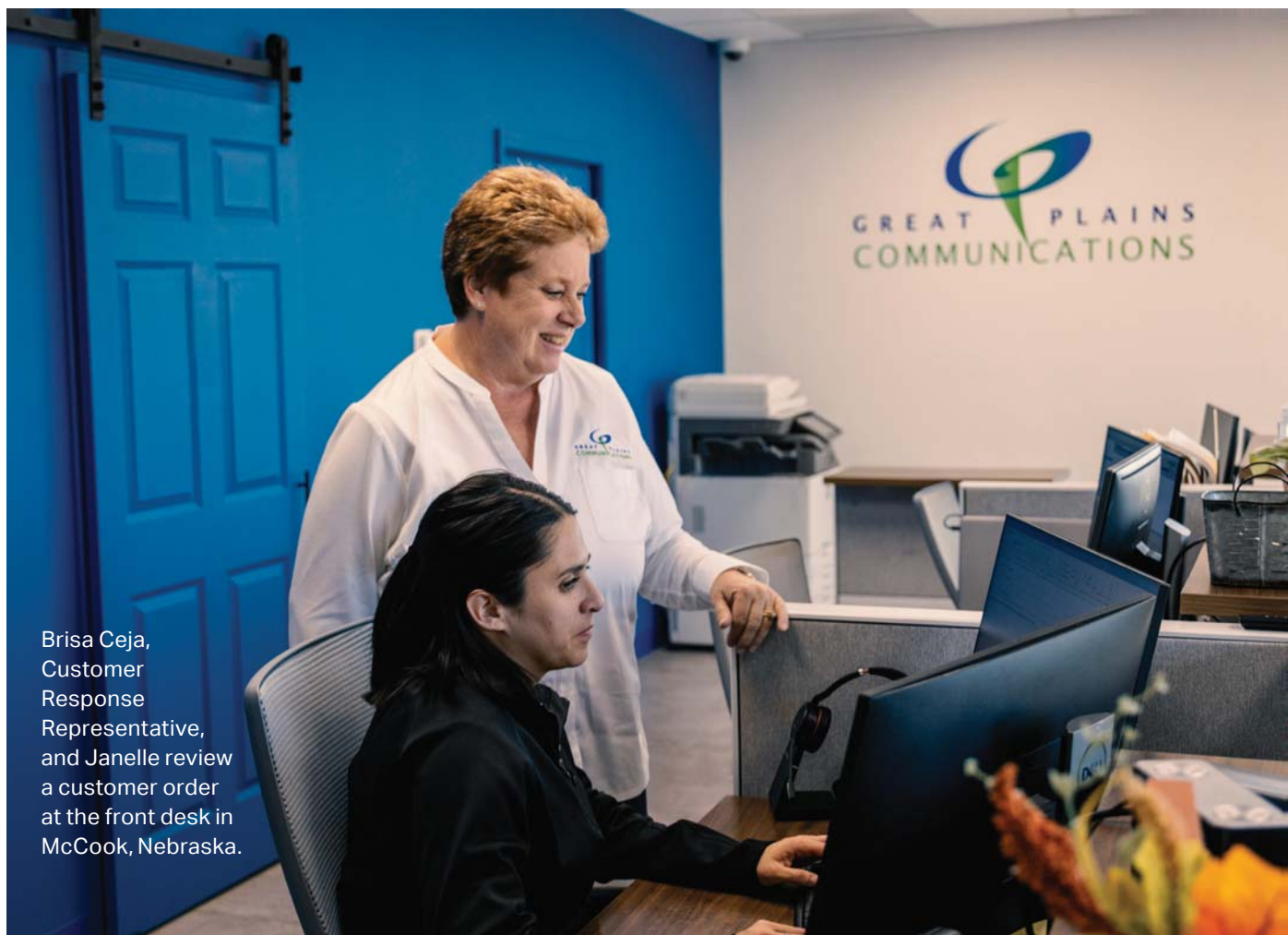
them through the decision-making process. To ensure we can serve the needs of all customers, we have embarked on a digital transformation process that includes enhancements to our current online user experience.

TOPIC: CE and Digital Transformation

ISE: What customer experience efforts are you making to ensure GPC is delivering the highest standard of customer service against the competition?

Allison: GPC is in the middle of a digital transformation that will create efficiencies and tools to streamline the customer experience. We strive to make it easy for customers to sign up and do business with us in a way that fits into their busy lives. This will allow us to serve the customer more quickly and communicate through methods they use every day.

While we use technology to create efficiencies, reduce time-lines and provide multiple communication methods for our customers, our employees' availability and responsiveness across the company make us different. We pride ourselves on having a high-performing network and high-performing people; when we say that, we mean it.



Brisa Ceja, Customer Response Representative, and Janelle review a customer order at the front desk in McCook, Nebraska.

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Janelle walks through a customer fiber installation with Jared Tighe, Outside Plant (OSP) Engineering Technician.

TOPIC: Motivating Your Team

ISE: How do you motivate and empower employees to improve customer experience and continue elevating GPC in this business area?

Allison: We started a program a little over a year ago called the “WOW” program. We ask our customers how we are doing through our technicians and phone representatives as they interact with them, in addition to regular customer surveys for new customer installations and resolved trouble tickets. This program is not about the run-of-the-mill good customer service moments (that is our GPC standard operating procedure); these are examples of employees going above and beyond to deliver excellence in customer experience. We track these monthly, quarterly and annually and share them company-wide to recognize the efforts of employees receiving WOW customer shout-outs and to encourage others to do the same. The program has been a success and continues to grow.

TOPIC: AI and Automation

ISE: What tools and processes do you engage to streamline business practices?

Allison: Automation and the new AI options will allow us to

continue to find ways to do things better and more efficiently. We aim to utilize these new tools while monitoring the customer experience. We don’t want to sacrifice the human aspect of the customer experience while creating automation and efficiency. Our goal is to achieve the right balance.

TOPIC: The Faces of GPC

ISE: What hiring challenges are you finding when seeking new employees and retaining current ones?

Allison: The role of our customer-facing employees hasn’t changed dramatically. These people are the face of the company because they are the ones the customer interacts with daily. We want outgoing, helpful employees passionate about the customer experience and what we do for our customers.

We seek individuals who are a little more technical or have the capacity to understand the technical aspect of our company to adequately understand the customer’s communication challenges and help them solve issues by providing the right products and services to meet their needs. Additionally, we need to ensure we are constantly promoting our customer support as something the customer needs for the long haul as they continue to navigate the ever-changing world of technology.

TOPIC: Culture

ISE: As a person who has been in the industry and with GPC for several years, what do you think is a constant strength that has been present that still resonates with your customer and employee base today?

Allison: A constant strength for GPC is the culture, both the internal culture created by our employees and how that resonates with our customers in the form of a positive customer experience. We care. Our employees live, work and participate in the communities they serve. We aren't just passing through or there to make a sale. We are proud of the quality of our communication services and our genuine passion to serve customers by caring for them daily. We are here to partner with our customers and communities to make a difference and improve lives by providing high-quality service and support.

TOPIC: Advice

ISE: What one piece of advice would you give to a person who is just entering the customer experience industry?

Allison: Products come and go, price sensitivity comes and goes, but the customer experience and how you treat your customers will always be essential and a true differentiator for companies that want to stand the test of time. Be dedicated to your customers.

TOPIC: Nurturing Network Technician Talent

ISE: Network technicians are often the company's first and last face. That means you need talented individuals with strong problem-solving and customer-facing skills. Share how you nurture both.

Allison: This is two-fold: hire the right people and have the right programs and culture to support the customer experience. We employ technicians who live and work in the places they serve, many of them starting as summer interns while they are going to school. GPC encourages a high level of participation in the community, with many of our employees' coaching sports, volunteering with the fire department and even serving as mayor

“Products come and go, price sensitivity comes and goes, but the customer experience and how you treat your customers will always be essential and a true differentiator for companies that want to stand the test of time. Be dedicated to your customers.”



Janelle, Brian Orwig, OSP Project Engineer (center), and Travis Radnor, Sr. Director of Governmental Policy and Market Analysis (left), discussing fiber expansion plans in Kearney, Nebraska.



Janelle regularly conducts face-to-face meetings with technicians across the Midwest.

of their respective towns. We are part of the community, active and highly visible.

Additionally, our programs prioritize the customer experience, especially through our WOW program, highlighting employees providing exceptional customer experiences. We reward points to the employee, who can then redeem those to purchase items or gift cards. Overall, it is all about maintaining a positive culture within the company, inspiring employees to encourage each other, being passionate about putting the customer first and holding ourselves accountable to do what we say we will.

Our internal Culture Committee meets with, surveys and talks to employees about our company culture and what we can do better. This team has direct access to executive leadership, and we believe this makes us different.

TOPIC: Women in Telecom (WiT)

ISE: Being a woman in the C-Suite is a gift and a challenge. Share what you recommend for women who want to wear your shoes soon.

Allison: We should concentrate on elevating our knowledge, skills and abilities and taking care of our areas of responsibility. We need to work to understand the big picture, how our team fits and what we can do to contribute to the overall success of the company. Have confidence in what we know, work to be heard and don't apologize for pushing forward, working hard and getting things done. It is about how good we are at what we do that should matter.

TOPIC: Out-of-the-Box Thinking

ISE: How has the GPC team colored outside the lines to do business differently and better for its employees?

Allison: We challenge our employees to bring new ideas and enhancements to the jobs they do every day—a new approach or efficiency that helps the business. They are in the trenches with the best information to see what works and what doesn't. We need their ideas, and we need to hear their ideas. If it doesn't work, we'll make a change. Everyone's voice matters, so encouraging collaboration is essential. ■

Janelle Allison joined Great Plains Communications in 2005 and currently serves as the Chief Service Delivery Officer. She oversees several areas of the business including the GPC Customer Response Center, Network Operations Center, Field Operations and Project Management to ensure a superior customer experience. She is responsible for managing GPC's service delivery to ensure the development of strategic plans aligns with the accountability of performance and adheres to corporate values. Allison is also responsible for the attainment of operational, strategic and financial goals. She is a Certified Public Accountant with over 30 years of accounting, finance, operations and leadership experience in the financial and telecommunications industries. To learn more about GPC, visit gpc.com. Follow them on LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/great-plains-communications](https://www.linkedin.com/company/great-plains-communications), Facebook: [facebook.com/GreatPlainsCommunications](https://www.facebook.com/GreatPlainsCommunications) and X @GPC_updates.



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