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Business process highlights: Customer Service

The *LookOut* has been spotlighting business plan items each process is working on. We've shined a light on Process Support and Benefit Plan Design so far; now we're putting Customer Service center stage.

Business Reduction Strategies. CS will look for places to reduce or eliminate work by improving communication and meeting customer needs before customers contact us. They'll do it by getting feedback from CS staff, looking at data from Clarity and Siebel, and working with CE. For example: if we get the same type of call over and over, what can we do better?

By finding better ways to engage customers, and provide them the information they need before they contact us, we'll Forge Operational Excellence and Instill Customer Confidence.

Insurance Process Redesign. Meetings to put together business requirements (what we want the tool to be able to do), were held throughout September and October, and they are complete. With the IPR, we will:

- Manage healthcare at the individual level instead of the contract level.
- Be driven by business rules to reduce mistakes, but keep flexibility to make administrative decisions.
- Administer health insurance eligibility and enrollment more effectively.

For the insurance processors, the design calls for a new insurance tool with all insurance information on one page, and the ability to click on a name and see more detailed information, like the history of changes.

In addition, the business rules will be in the tool. Right now, processors have to determine if someone is eligible and do quite a bit of calculating and updating. The new design automates eligibility rules, start and end dates of certain plans and other common activities so staff won't have to enter those manually. This will substantially speed up and simplify insurance processing.

The design also allows for flexibility, so when rules change, we will be able to adapt quickly and easily, in many cases without coding changes.

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✖ On The Horizon	
• Martin Luther King Jr. Day - January 20	

✖ Quick Links	
• ORS Member Website	
• ORS Employer Website	

✖ Commonly Used Acronyms	
AST	Application Support Team
BLA	Business Leadership Assembly (EPC, BPOs, and BPLs)
BPD	Benefit Plan Design
BPL	Business Process Leader
BPO	Business Process Owner
CE	Customer Education
CS	Customer Service
DB	Defined Benefit
DC	Defined Contribution
DTMB	Department of Technology, Management and Budget
EPC	Executive Process Council (Phil, Laurie H, Laurie M, Anthony, and Kerrie)
EPO	Executive Process Owner
ER	Employer Reporting
ORS	Office of Retirement Services
PRIM	Preretirement Information Meeting (public school employees)
PRO	Preretirement Orientation (state employees)

To get the requirements right, several staff members from all areas of ORS attended the meetings to provide input, listen, and learn.

Several staff from BPD, including **Mark Howard** and **Aaron Usher**, sat in to provide insight and guidance regarding insurance rates, fees, and rules.

The Customer Service requirements team was led by **Travis Peake** who lent a technical perspective and by Kara Gross, for her procedures knowledge. Staff were invited into specific sessions based on their knowledge areas: **Angie DeRose**, **Steve Cary**, and **Nicole Dumond** contributed to requirements for COBRA, Pays-us, invoicing, the 834 batch processing, policy (business rules), and to provide a processing perspective.

Requirements meetings lasted two to four hours a day, every day but Fridays, for two months. In addition to those mentioned above, the following people were also part of the requirements team and made valuable contributions to the requirements:

Mark Bennett, Randy Bitner, Steve Crippen, Kara Gross, Bhaskar Guttikonda, Jimmy Isaac, Sanjeev Kondal, Andy Kolp, Kevin Kubacki, Laurie Mitchell, Venkat Ramakrishnan, Mark Sands, Mahesh Shanmugasundaram, Erik Simmer, Nagapriya Subramani, Christ Trout, and Katie Wright.

"This will make it easier to enter information, and eligibility will be driven by rules, not by the processor having to keep it all in their heads," said Angie. "It's going to be awesome once it's done."

Once requirements are finished, construction will start in preparation for an end of FY 2014 roll-out.

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IRS contribution and pension limits announced for next year

To prepare for the new calendar year, here's a breakdown of the contribution and pension limits for 2014.

The IRS limits for pension plans and 401 (k) and 457 accounts won't be changing for 2014. The employee contribution limit for the 401(k) and 457 is \$17,500, and the Catch-Up Contribution Limit (for those 50 years or older) is \$5,500 for each 401(k) and 457 Plan, totaling \$23,000 for each plan.

The amount of wages that can be taxed for FICA has gone up to \$117,000. The defined benefit compensation calculation limit for 2014 is \$260,000, so members hired after October 1, 1996, will only be able to use up to that amount in calculating their pension benefit.

The Social Security earnings limit for workers who are younger than "full" retirement age (age 66 for people born in 1943 through 1954) will be \$15,480 in 2014. \$1 in benefits is deducted for each \$2 earned over that amount.

The Social Security earnings limit for people turning age 66 in 2014 will be \$41,400. \$1 of benefits is deducted for each \$3 earned over that amount until the month the worker turns age 66. There is no limit on earnings for workers who are "full"



PS	Process Support
SME	Subject Matter Expert
UAT	User Acceptance Testing

retirement age or older for the entire year.

You can find more information on the 2014 Social Security changes on the [Social Security Website](#). For more information on all of the IRS changes, visit the [IRS website](#).

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ORS Strategic Intent



- **Forge Operational Excellence**
- **Instill Customer Confidence**
- **Engage Hearts and Minds**

ORS receives PPCC award for tenth consecutive year

ORS has recently been awarded the 2013 Public Pension Coordinating Council Standards Award from the Public Pension Coordinating Councils Standards Program (PPCC) for both funding and administration. ORS has received this award every year since 2004.



The PPCC is a coalition of three associations that represent public pension funds covering the vast majority of public employees in the US. Participating associations are the National Association of State Retirement Administrators (NASRA), the National Council of Teacher Retirement (NCTR), and the National Conference on Public Employee Retirement Systems (NCPERS).

The PPCC Standards reflect minimum expectations for public retirement system management and administration, and serve as a benchmark for all defined benefit public plans to be measured. "This award is a reflection of the hard work, dedication to excellence, and high degree of professionalism displayed by ORS and Financial Services staff," says **Steve Crippen**, BPO of BPD.

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submit a
POP
shout out



Here's a toast!

Wish you had more confidence speaking in front of people? To build confidence and presentation skills, **Krystal Strachan** has started participating in Toastmasters. The Toastmasters program has been around for many years, and blends the art of speaking with the science of leadership. The group meets every other Tuesday to hone speaking skills and develop leadership abilities through evaluations, listening, mentoring, and serving as club officers. Krystal plans to take these leadership skills out into the real world and use them here within ORS.

CE leadership attends pension education conference

Ian Broughton and **Allison Wardlaw** attended the National Pension Education Conference November 2 - 6. The conference provided up-to-date information on retirement education, communications trends, and important issues facing the public retirement community. It also promoted professional development, networking with national peers, and creative approaches to serving customers. Allison said, "We focused a lot on how to make things that are important more interesting. It was nice to spend time thinking about how our communication to customers can be more strategic, creative, concise and interactive. We definitely got a lot of information from other pension systems about their communication successes that we can apply here."

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business briefs

CE debuts state employee workshop

The *Picture Your Future: Advancing on Your Road to Retirement Readiness* workshop was successfully introduced to DB state employee members on November 5 at Wayne RESA. According to post-workshop surveys, the attendees found the workshop beneficial, eye-opening, and thought provoking. The workshop registration was filled to capacity only a few days after members received their direct email announcements. You'll see additional sessions of *Picture Your Future* in the next few months.

Actuarial rates are changing for public school service purchases

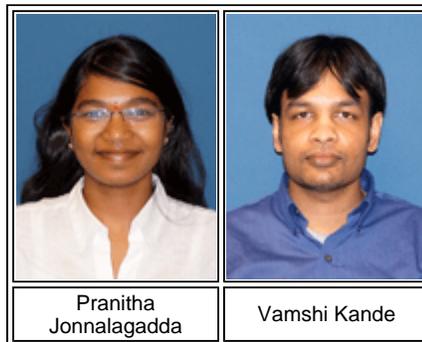
The actuarial rates for purchase of public school service credit are changing January 1, 2014. Current bills for service credit will expire at the end of the year. Any new bills created after January 1 will have the cost calculated at the new rate.

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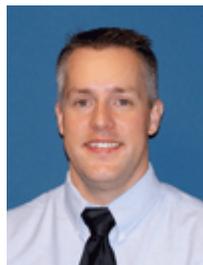
Coming

On November 29 AST welcomed 2 Java developers, **Pranitha Jonnalagadda** and **Vamshi Kande**.



Pranitha recently moved to Lansing from India, where she earned a bachelors' degree from Sri Venkateswara University and worked in IT for Mahindra Satyam. Pranitha likes to play basketball and also enjoys listening to music and dancing.

Vamshi Kande just relocated to Lansing from California, where he spent some time as a java operator with Wells Fargo. He likes to play tennis and cricket, and enjoys watching films.



Adam Perkins joined BPD on November 4. Adam, originally from Oregon, likes to travel with his wife and three children when possible, and likes fishing, hunting, and the outdoors in general. Adam has experience in policy development and administration, earned an MBE while in Phoenix, and worked for five years at the Oregon State Hospital where *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was filmed.

Going

ORS bids farewell to **Joe Brown** who accepted a position with Accident Fund. Joe's last day is November 15.

BPD wishes the best to **Angella Miller**, who also accepted a position with Accident Fund. Angella's last day is November 20.

On the move

Lois Musbach will be filling in as a WOC BPL for BPD with Angella's departure until the position is filled.

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125th state trooper school graduates

During a ceremony at the Lansing Center on October 10, 65 recruits graduated from the 125th Trooper Recruit School.

The 125th Trooper Recruit School began on May 12 when 80 prospective troopers reported to the Michigan State Police Training Academy. For 21 weeks, recruits received training in firearms, water safety, defensive tactics, patrol techniques, report writing, ethics, first aid, criminal law, crime scene processing, and precision driving. They also learned about their retirement program for the first time.

ORS does a short overview of the State Police Pension Plus retirement plan during the recruits' first week at the academy, along with presentations from MSP Human Resources, the State Police Trooper's Association, and the Civil Service Commission's Employee Benefits Division.

The 126th Trooper Recruit School will begin just after the first of the year, with ING presenting at the orientation.

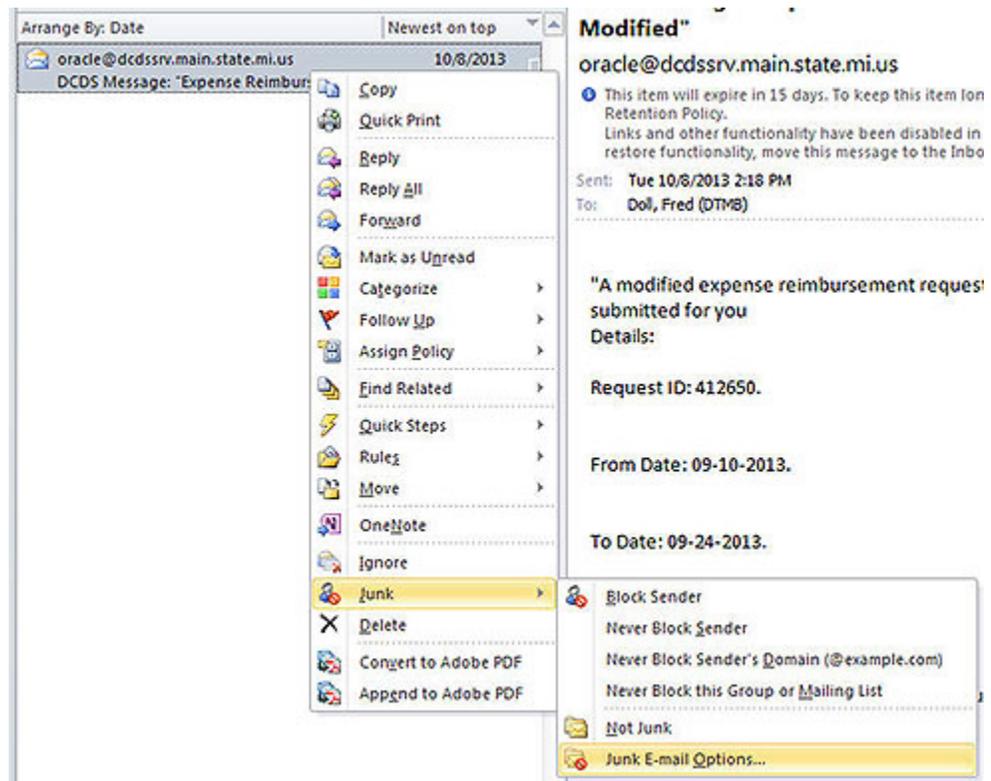


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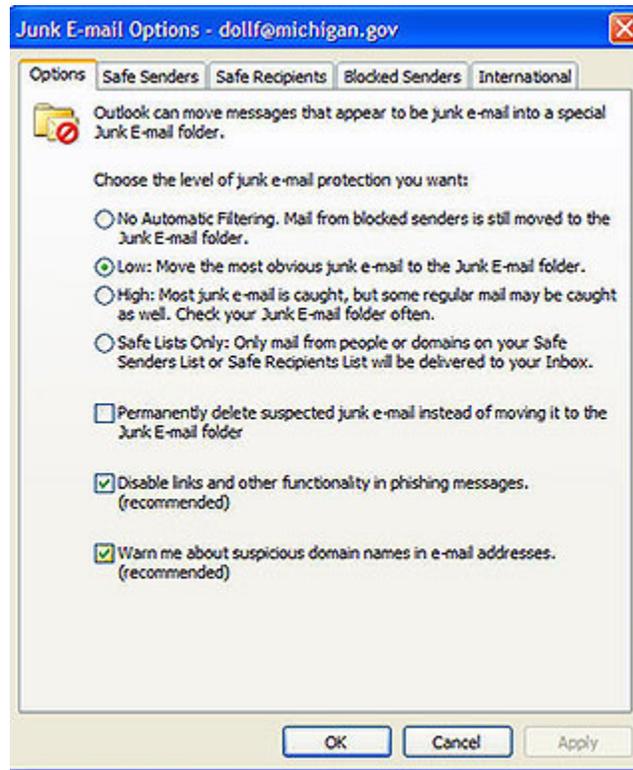


Junk in your Outlook

With the recent upgrade to Microsoft Outlook, some folks have seen email from trusted sources in their Junk email folder. You can right click on the email in your Junk folder and click Not Junk, which will move the email back into your inbox. For a better fix, check the settings for your Junk email.



After you right click on an email in the Junk folder, select Junk E-mail Options. When the screen pops up, check the settings on the Options tab. Most people will want the Low setting selected.



You can also check other tabs, like Blocked Senders, to assure you're not blocking a trusted source.

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ORS Purpose:
We are an innovative retirement organization driven to empower our customers for a successful today and a secure tomorrow.

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Director:
Phil Stoddard
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Hunting season begins

There are quite a few avid hunters at ORS, PS's **Fred Covert** among them. Every year, Fred dons a "deer beard" for the occasion. You can read his deer beard story in this classic issue of the [LookOut](#).



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What makes Thanksgiving dishes traditional?

When we sit down with our families for Thanksgiving dinner, most of us will probably face the traditional Thanksgiving menu of turkey, cranberry sauce, stuffing, and pumpkin pie. Have you ever wondered how these dishes became the traditional food for the Thanksgiving holiday?



Turkey may not have been on the menu



at the 1621 celebration that is widely considered the "First Thanksgiving." The best existing account of the Pilgrims' harvest feast comes from Edward Winslow, author of *Mourt's Relations; A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth*. Winslow's account of the First Thanksgiving does not mention turkey, but does reference the Pilgrims gathering "wild fowl" for the meal, which likely meant ducks and geese.

Nearly a century later, accounts of colonists hunting wild turkeys gained traction and became the Thanksgiving meal of choice for Americans after President Lincoln declared Thanksgiving a national holiday in 1863.

Eating turkey for Thanksgiving has practical reasons too. The birds are large enough to feed a large family and, unlike chicken or cows, they don't serve other purposes like laying eggs or producing milk.

So when you sit down to Thanksgiving dinner this year, take a minute to consider its culinary history before you dig in.

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This issue's header is M-22 Fall by Carolyn Damstra.

Note: Because some of the links in this newsletter point to network resources, some of the links may not work if you are reading this outside of the organization.