



Management Assistance Program

EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE:

The Dynamics of High Quality Internal/External Customer Service

GOALS:

- To help organizations and managers facilitate philosophies and practices of effective customer service in their workplaces. Increase customer satisfaction and loyalty
- To Decrease complaints, loss of business and poor customer or public relations
- To Empower and motivate employees to take pride in their organization and its products/services

OVERVIEW:

High quality customer service skills can make or break a business, or at least make a significant difference in its bottom line. Competition is extremely stiff today, and customer service is an area where a company can distinguish itself with its customer base, without significant expense. When a company, through its direct service staff, demonstrates courtesy, competency, and a commitment to help, customer satisfaction is generally higher which, in turn, leads to an increase in repeat business.

Effective customer service is not about being nice to callers, it is about demonstrating ongoing commitment to helping them get their needs met:

- Efficiently – as quickly as possible without sacrificing quality.
- Effectively – creating an atmosphere in which concern for meeting customer needs is demonstrated consistently by staff.
- Courteously – the inclusion of all of the bells and whistles that display respect and care to customers.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To empower and motivate employees to take pride in their organization and its products/services

- Realization – There are both internal and external customers and clients
- Commitment – To every aspect of organizational quality and integrity
- Understanding – Their role in providing the highest level of satisfaction
- Knowledge – The mission and goals of the organization in achieving quality
- Responsiveness – To each request, inquiry, concern, or complaint
- Dedication - To achieving satisfaction or appreciation by the clients
- Honesty – To maintain personal and professional integrity with each client
- Professionalism – To gain the respect of the client while maintaining professional boundaries and organizational goals
- Clarity – Communicating and problem solving for ultimate success

2. Provide clarity and understanding of the benefits of effective customer service

Which include increased customer satisfaction and loyalty and decreased complaints, loss of business and poor customer or public relations through:

- Enhanced buying or service experience for your customers, who are then:
 - More likely to return
 - Higher frequency of return (depending on your type of business)
 - More likely to report their positive experience to others
- Empowerment of the employees who deal directly and indirectly with customers:
 - They can more effectively & efficiently handle each encounter
 - Their experience with your customers is easier and more fulfilling
 - Complaints from customers decrease
 - Complaints from staff decrease
 - Complaints from management decrease
 - Unsolicited compliments from customers increase
 - Management interventions with customers decrease
 - Management interventions with staff decrease

- Effects on the Bottom Line
 - Increased customer flow, which for retail businesses is increased profit.
 - Increased customer satisfaction, which for the service industry translates into fewer calls from the same caller for the same issue, which in turn saves money.
 - Decreased time spent with each encounter, which saves money for all businesses.
 - Increased positive PR and decreased negative PR

3. Define the power dynamics of customer service and train managers to instruct staff to:

- Direct their focus solely on the mission (To treat every Customer Service Encounter as an opportunity to serve as a resource to help each customer meet his/her needs in as efficient, effective, and qualitative a manner as possible.) and not on the personality, issues, or other distractions presented by the customer.
- Maintain the objectives of accommodation, collaboration and compromise without avoidance, confrontation or frustration.
- Utilize the power of self-control, professional confidence and positive persuasion to respond effectively and gain respect and trust.

4. Create effective customer service guidelines through standardized:

- Customer service encounter scenarios and options
- Effective customer service mission statements for each department
- Customer service philosophy guidelines for the entire organization
- Ways to encourage employees to practice quality customer service
- Discussions regarding behaviors and attitudes that foster or undermine customer service interactions and ways to improve client satisfaction
- Techniques and strategies to translate external customer service dynamics into the internal customer service models to assure teamwork and interdepartmental collaboration
- Procedures and Processes to deal with difficult encounters and conflicting goals and objectives

SUMMARY: Tips for Effective Customer Service

- Do not personalize the interaction. The encounter has more to do with accomplishing the mission and goals of organization than in being right.
- Determine how to facilitate helping the client meet their needs or resolve their concerns – that is the mission. Sometimes their need is just to be heard.
- When necessary, educate customers regarding more effective ways to attain their goals and get their issues resolved. Partner with them to gain success.
- Do not engage customers regarding issues outside of the mission. Some clients have mixed agendas or unclear motives. Stay focused on assisting their needs.
- Maintain professional demeanor with the customer whenever there is a difference of opinion and suggest alternatives for satisfaction.
- Stay within your organizational and personal boundaries (no false promises or negative comments which would mislead them as to your intentions).
- Have a plan for situations where professional boundaries are violated and you need higher level support or guidance.
- There may be some situations where you may need to excuse yourself temporarily to regain your composure. In those instances remember your goals.
- Keep your feelings about the customer separate from the overall mission of providing them with quality professional assistance and guidance.
- Use your workplace support system to diffuse feelings associated to the interaction and notify your managers when a situation may escalate to levels involving them.