

Customer Service Idea Book

2008



Customer service has been established as a top priority during the 2007–08 school year.

Each of us is encouraged to remember we all have customers,

both internal and external, who rely upon us to provide quality services.

This resource is compiled from suggestions by board members from the RESA's nine public school academies. These board members represent a wide range of occupations and experiences.



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Keep it personal

Ultimately, all customer service is personal — it allows the customer to make a personal connection with you. Some suggestions:

- Remember “The 5/10 Rule.” This rule states that if a customer is within 5 feet of you, you must speak to him or her; if a customer is within 10 feet, you must greet him or her with a simple “hello,” or eye contact and a smile.
- Acronyms represent a series of items you want to remember. In customer service terms, remember to be SMART: Smile, Make their day, Acknowledge, Respect, Thank.
- Use the customer’s name in conversation. Saying, “That’s a good idea, Bob,” is far more personal than it would be if you don’t mention Bob by name.
- Use storytelling techniques when relevant to the issue at hand. Aesop, in his own way, would have been a heck of a management consultant.
- Think positive and use positive language when talking. If you communicate that the glass is half-full, the customer is far less likely to see it as half-empty.

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Meet the customer's needs

Good service is defined by the customer, not by you. We are all customers at various points in the day, and the actions that make us feel appreciated are the same actions that will make your customers feel appreciated.

- Listen. Then listen some more. Unless you fully know the customer's needs and expectations, it's pretty hard to meet those needs and expectations.
- What you're wearing can affect customer expectations. Dress appropriately for the occasion. Sometimes, casual attire can send the unintended message that you are casual about other things, too.
- Set a time limit on responding to all messages. The closer to "immediately" you can get, the better service you are providing.
- Customer complaints are like infections: They tend to get worse unless they receive quick attention.
- If someone wants more information about your department and services, or about the RESA in general, make a priority of providing that information.
- If something is due to a customer at a certain time, get it there earlier if possible but never later.

Improve all meetings

Meetings are the bane of many people's existences. But they don't have to be that way.

- Make sure suitable refreshments are offered or made available at all meetings with customers. A cup of coffee or a bottle of water often makes a huge difference.
- If customers are meeting you at your office, greet them at the front desk and escort them to the meeting room — even if they have been there a hundred times before.
- Keep the meeting as brief as possible by sticking to the subject at hand. That shows respect for the customer's time.

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Following up

After communicating with a customer about some issue or project, it's always a good idea to follow up.

- Keep the customer updated on the progress of a project. Even if you don't have a lot new to report, a quick e-mail will let the customer know that the project hasn't been forgotten.
- If appropriate, mailing a card to a customer is always memorable. But an e-mail or phone call can work as well. In any case, you should thank the customer, reiterate whatever next steps are to be taken, and offer to answer any questions or provide additional help.
- After delivering a project to a customer, be sure to solicit feedback: Was there anything that would have made the project better? How can we do things better in the future?
- If something went wrong on a project, don't deflect the blame. That doesn't mean you have to accept blame if it doesn't belong to you; rather, the issue isn't fixing blame, it's getting the problem fixed.
- Call a new customer the day following your initial contact. Let them know their satisfaction is important to you.