The Customer Isn’t Always Right

Presented by
Jeremy King, SPHR
Business Development Manager
FlashPoint
Session Overview

Session Purpose
This session will provide participants with the tools, resources, and guidelines to establish a customer service climate based on trust and respect.

Session Goals
- Discover tips and techniques for delivering high-quality customer service.
- Understand the fundamentals of customer service (attitude, professionalism, knowledge, sincerity, etc.).
- Discover techniques for reacting to frustrated customers.
- Understand the importance of internal customer service.
Customer service is the day-to-day treatment of your stakeholders—citizens, elected officials, communities, and so on—who call, visit, or write to your organization.

**Customer service includes all of the following:**

- The way problems are resolved.
- The way people are treated by all employees.
- The appearance of every employee, the surroundings, and the equipment used.
- How telephone calls, e-mails, and letters are handled.
- The way employees talk about the organization to their friends, family, and neighbors.
- The overall impression any person has of the organization’s quality of work, employees, or services.
- The first impression people perceive.
- The workplace knowledge and attitude that employees display to the public.
- How communication skills are used to determine the customer’s needs and wants.
- How well the customer’s expectations are met.
- The last impression people receive.

---

*Every contact with the customer leaves an impression.*  
*Each of these impressions can influence how helpful or difficult the customer will be.*
Who Are Customers?

- Customers are the **most important people** in my organization.
- Customers are not dependent on me. I am dependent on them.
- Customers are **not interruptions** of my work but the reasons for it.
- Customers do me a favor by working with me. I don’t do them a favor by calling them.
- Customers are part of my organization, not outside of it.
- Customers are human, with feelings and emotions just like me.
- Customers are not people with whom I argue or match wits.
- Customers **have needs**, and my job is to find out what they are and satisfy them (to the extent possible).
- Customers deserve my courtesy and attention at all times.
- Customers make **my payday** possible.
- Customers are **the lifeblood** of this and every organization.
- Customers are those special VIPs who call on the phone.
Internal Customers

Everyone has internal customers—for you, it’s the people you serve within your organization. The same basic customer service skills you use when dealing with external customers apply to your internal customers as well.

Define your internal customers as they relate to your specific job tasks. Remember that every aspect of your job ultimately serves some “customer.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Internal Customer</th>
<th>How I Can Improve Service to This Internal Customer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Fundamentals of Customer Service

• Attitude
• Professionalism
• Knowledge
• Understanding of customer service
• Thinking like your customer
• Communication of the customer service culture to ALL associates
• Clearly defined empowerment and boundaries
• Training
• Sound judgment
• Sincerity

Present a Professional Image

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Be honest</th>
<th>Be clean; smell fresh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be friendly and pleasant</td>
<td>Be available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be flexible</td>
<td>Be sensitive to special needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be accurate</td>
<td>Be steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be familiar with the customer</td>
<td>Be courteous in language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## What Is Professionalism?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Etiquette</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making/Keeping Commitments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tact and Diplomacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# The Three B Speaking Method

| 1. Be Direct | • Don’t beat around the bush.  
|             | • Don’t break the ice with fluff.  
|             | • Remember that you have 30 seconds to get to the point. |
| 2. Be Specific | • Use objective language.  
|             | • Don’t judge the situation; observe it.  
|             | • Use facts. |
| 3. Be Respectful | • Check: How would you want others to treat your family? |

## Notes
Focus on Controlling the Controllables

Where are you focusing your energy?

I Do Not Control

I Control

What CAN I do?

Effectiveness requires the integrity and discipline to act upon those things that are within your control and to accept those things that you cannot influence.
Sixteen Words and Phrases That Keep Stakeholders Cool

- Hello!
- Good morning!
- Please.
- Thank you!
- I’m very sorry.
- Excuse me.
- You’re welcome.
- I’d be happy to do that for you.
- Thanks for your input!
- How may I help you?
- I’m sorry to keep you waiting.
- Thank you for waiting.
- It was nice talking with you.
- Is there anything else I can do for you?
- Thank you for coming in (or calling).
- It’s been a pleasure to serve you.
Choosing Your Reaction

**Stimulus . . .**
- Angry customers
- Frustrated customers
- Disappointed customers
- Abusive customers

**Your Reaction**

Between everything that comes your way (the stimulus) and your reaction is a space—in that space is your ability to choose your reaction!

**Overall Tips for Managing Challenging Individuals and Situations**

- **Don’t take it personally!** The behavior of others has very little to do with you—you’ll never know for sure what is going on with others to create their challenging behavior.

- **Focus on your reaction.** Don’t try to change others or the situation. You can change only your responses. Take responsibility for your emotional reactions and make choices that feel good to you.

- **Check your perceptions.** Did you actually hear what you thought you heard? Are your emotions or your attitude getting in the way? Remain objective and focused on helping the situation.

- **Be respectful.** It can be difficult to respect a person who may be yelling, swearing, or behaving like a two-year-old. But remember—you don’t have to respect the behavior, you just have to respect the person.

- **Don’t give away your power.** What is the source of your power? Unlike the challenging customer or employee, you are in control, and your only problem at the moment is helping with the challenging person’s problem. If you step out of this position and start reacting to the challenging person in an emotional way, you’ll lose control, you’ll lose your power, and the situation will likely degenerate to the point that no one comes out ahead. So begin with a mindset that says, “No matter what, I will respect the stakeholder or person and retain my control.”
Let Me Tell You What I Can Do

What do you say and do when you have to turn down a stakeholder’s request or deliver bad news? How do you say “no” without creating a negative customer experience?

When You Can’t Meet a Stakeholder’s Need

1. Explain the reason why.

2. Show empathy.

3. Let the customer know what you can do (offer an alternative solution).
## Personal Commitment Contract

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Specific Customer Service Challenges</strong></th>
<th><strong>Specific Actions to Overcome</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jeremy King’s human resource experience, primarily in training and development, spans more than ten years. He began his career in recruiting and supported various organizations in a seven-state territory. He also developed and launched a successful training and development service for PMI.

For five years Jeremy managed 26.2 Dynamics, Inc., his own customized training and development firm, serving clients throughout the United States and in Canada and Mexico. He has worked with many groups ranging from entry-level employees to Fortune 500 executives.

Jeremy has presented at various state conferences and Society for Human Resource Management chapters throughout Indiana, and he has facilitated training for several Indiana county leadership programs. His strong desire to help others fuels his passion for human resources.

Jeremy holds a bachelor’s degree in management from the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University–Indianapolis and is certified as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR). He is a member of the Kiwanis Club of Indianapolis, where he serves as chair for the Builders Club and co-chair of the Young Professionals; the Human Resource Association of Central Indiana; the Central Indiana chapter of the American Society for Training and Development; and the Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce’s ChamberAction. He is a former Big Brothers Big Sisters mentor and currently serves on the special events support team for Special Olympics Indiana. In recognition of Jeremy’s services, the city of Greenwood presented him with the Outstanding Community Service Award.