

## Customer Service Competency Development Activities

### Competency Definition

Anticipates and meets the needs of both internal and external customers. Delivers high-quality products and services; is committed to continuous improvement.

### Developmental Activity Levels

#### All (A)

*Applies to all competency levels*

#### Beginner-Basic Knowledge (B)

*A person at the Beginner-Basic Knowledge level has limited experience applying the competency. He/she applies general knowledge in common situations but has limited practical experience in applying the competency in a work environment presenting more complex situations.*

#### Mid-level (M)

*A person with mid-level proficiency has applied the competency repeatedly and successfully in the performance of his/her job but still has much to learn about the advanced aspects or behaviors associated with the competency. A person at this level can usually apply the competency on his/her own.*

#### High (H)

A person at the High level has extensive knowledge of and experience with this competency and can apply the competency exceptionally well on the job without assistance. At this level one is an expert and has enough experience to teach the competency to others.

### Articles, Books, and Websites

A Anders, George, "[360-Degree Customer Care](#)", Fast Company, July, 2001. Thomas M. Siebel, founder of Siebel Systems Inc, shares five of his best insights for connecting with and meeting the complex demands of customers.

A Zemke, Ron, Anderson, Kristin, [Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Service](#) (3rd Edition), AMACOM, October, 2002.

Provide a crash course in how to care for customers and how to make exemplary service happen in an organization time and time again. Contains pragmatic and easy-to-remember concepts and skills that can be applied immediately.

A Evenson, Renee, [Customer Service 101: Basic Lessons to Be Your Best](#), Bull's Eye

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Publishing, July, 1997.

Evenson gives clear and basic rules for outstanding customer service. Subject by subject, she gives easy pointers on how every person in contact with a customer, both in person and on the phone, can give outstanding and sincere service.

**A** Leland, Karen, Bailey, Keith, Bateman, Giles H., John Wiley & Sons, Customer Service for Dummies (2nd Edition) September, 1999.

Designed to instruct you on how to understand key customer service concepts, plan and implement a customer service strategy, foster good face to face and telephone service, improve e-mail and Internet communications, and deal effectively with angry or abusive customers.

**A** Keenan, William Jr., "Customer Turnoffs", Industry Week, June, 2001.

This article discusses disconnect between service intentions and reality and the three categories of customer turnoffs that account for 97% of all responses to the author's survey on the topic.

**M** Jonathan Byrnes, Nail Customer Service, HBS Working Knowledge, January, 2005.

When you do a good job of fixing a customer service problem, you often earn more customer loyalty than if there had been no problem. This is when you can show your worth, and earn your customer's trust. This article provides some examples worth following

**H** Zemke, Ron, Woods, John A., Best Practices in Customer Service, AMACOM, January, 1999.

A one-stop resource that brings together the wisdom of dozens of customer service experts who explain and demonstrate how to implement the best practices available in customer service.

**H** Ford, Robert, Heaton, Cherrill P., Brown, Stephen W., Delivering Excellent Service: Lessons from the Best Firms, California Management Review, October, 2001. CMR214

Delivering excellent service is a challenge for most organizations. Although many aspire to it, the evidence from customer satisfaction surveys indicates that too few firms are able to deliver service excellence. On the other hand, some organizations consistently deliver excellent service. This article reviews ten lessons these benchmark service organizations have learned and shows how these organizations use them to meet and exceed the ever-rising expectations of their customers. These lessons can be emulated by any organization seeking such excellence.

**H** Jeff Gee, Valerie Gee, Super Service: Seven Keys to Delivering Great Customer Service...Even When You Don't Feel Like It!... Even When They Don't Deserve It! McGraw-Hill Trade, July, 1999.

In this book, Jeff and Valerie Gee share their straightforward, techniques and guidelines for coping with angry customers, minimizing stress, and making customer service providers feel

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great about doing their jobs. They discuss a new upbeat approach to front-line customer service, and how people who enjoy their work the most, provide the best customer service.

### Activities

**A** Organize customer service planning sessions with your staff to elicit ideas for how to improve customer service without sacrificing security.

**B** Practice using active listening techniques when communicating with the customer. Take notes on conversations that are not documented. Contact the customer one week after a complaint has been resolved to check on his or her satisfaction level.

**B** Shadow individuals with a reputation for customer satisfaction and observe the ways in which they work with their customers.

**B** Test your understanding of customer needs by making a list of what you believe each of your customer's needs are. Ask your customer to list their needs. Compare the two lists and identify the differences.

**M** Have regular one-on-one conversations with customer points-of-contact to solicit ongoing feedback on performance and customer service.

**H** Set up reminders to check in with customers (e.g., stakeholders, senior staff), even when there are no specific problems or issues.

**H** Talk with others to better understand how they have turned around problem customers (i.e., share success stories).

**H** Use a variety of contact methods for keeping in contact with and maintaining visibility with the customer.

**H** Visit other airports where TSA has established a reputation for exceptional customer service.

### Coaching Suggestions for Managers

**A** Assist team members with handling problematic customer service situations or conflicts effectively by helping them see the other point of view and developing mutually beneficial solutions to issues. To the extent possible, allow team members to resolve the issues on their own. Intercede only when the problem or conflict threatens important objectives or key relationships.

**A** Encourage your team members to work with interested parties and stakeholders (e.g., airline representatives, airport management). Examples of the types of outreach they could do include: offering to speak at meetings; writing articles for an internal newsletter; or conducting a "how to comply with the regulations" session at a meeting. Encourage them to keep the lines of

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communication open.

**M** Watch for good signs of customer service such as simply smiling and saying "hello" to the customer. Make sure to point out to all staff any good examples that you see.

**M** Challenge staff members to increase customer responsiveness by asking them to identify ways in which the group can be more responsive to a customer. Have them ask for customer feedback to verify improved service.

**M** Encourage the staff member to ask customers for feedback. Enhance their customer sensitivity by challenging them to experience their services from the customer's perspective. Ask them to find a partner from the staff to conduct dry runs with the partner sitting in as your customer.

**M** Have the person develop a set of standard questions that they can use to test their own, and their staff's, knowledge of their customer. If their answers are inadequate, they can identify steps to take to become more knowledgeable about their customer.

**H** Ask staff members what their customers want or will need that your organization does not offer now. Request ideas for changes and improvements, then commit resources to allow the person to make those changes. Stay in touch to support the change.

**H** Assign staff members the task of talking to internal or external customers to listen to their needs, expectations and ideas for how your team's work group could more effectively meet those needs and expectations. Ask them to prepare an action plan to improve service to those internal or external customers.

**H** Have staff members debrief situations in which their work group failed to meet customer needs. Have them focus on how the team can overcome the failure and prevent a recurrence. Encourage them to follow up with a positive message to the team outlining the key learning's and improvements.

**H** Introduce staff members to key stakeholders that they would not meet on their own. Have your staff members ask them what their needs are or what's important to them. Then have your staff analyze what they have done that met or exceeded the stakeholders' expectations and needs, as well as identify what else they could do in the future to address them more effectively.