Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

Principles of Customer Service
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Principles

A. Focus on customer service

1. Good customer service centers on treating customers the way you would like to be treated yourself.

2. Involve processes of building relationships with clientele, establishing communication, building trust, developing mutual understanding, and resolving problems or conflicts.

3. Practice the “Cs” of customer service
   a. Consideration
   b. Commitment
   c. Caring
   d. Communication
Principles of Customer Service

Principles (continued)

B. Finish strong
1. Research shows the final interaction is what resides in the memory
2. Finish the project or interaction with the biggest bang.
3. How can I add value to this experience?

C. Get the negatives out of the way
1. Based on what was just said, get the unpleasant tasks out of the way early
2. Examples: delivery of bad news, filling out a lengthy application process, what cannot be done for the customer
3. This allows you to focus on the positives or what we can do at the end of the interaction.
Principles of Customer Service

Principles (continued)

D. Understand your customer’s needs and meet those needs
   1. Listen, Listen, Listen.
   2. Identify what you can do to meet those needs.

E. People find comfort in regular, repetitive, and consistent, interactions
   1. Use a similar, familiar look and feel when interacting.
   2. Example: Consistent look with publications, presentations, letters, etc.
Principles (continued)

F. Employees are customers.

G. Every interaction is a chance to put the organization in a positive light
   1. Whenever interacting about Extension and Outreach, work time or not, you are creating an image of the organization, and therefore, yourself.
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Summary

A. Evaluate your office from a “first impressions” standpoint. Do some housekeeping.
B. Is the office easy to find? What about signage?
C. Do you have parking spaces specifically for “Extension and Outreach Visitors?”
D. If possible, mail any information the same day it is requested.
E. Do follow-up. Check to see if the information was received and if it was appropriate.
F. Return telephone calls promptly
G. Maintain up-to-date addresses.
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Summary (continued)

H. Be a problem solver. Help find the answers or know who can be a referral.
I. Build trust by admitting you don’t know the answer, but you will find an answer, if possible.
J. Regard customer complaints seriously. Most people don’t complain, even if they would like to.
K. People are convenience driven today.
L. Appear friendly. Smile. Make eye contact. Give them your full attention. Let waiting customers know you will be right with them. Apologize for any wait.
“A dissatisfied customer tells 22 people; while a satisfied customer tells 8 people.”

- Ford Motor Company Executive