

WEEK FOUR: GO THE EXTRA MILE MAY 16, 2011 SERVICE PRINCIPLES NEWSLETTER

This week our focus is on the Service Principle “Go The Extra Mile”

Our customers expect to be “satisfied” with our service. It is our job to go beyond “satisfy”. When we do we are showing our customers how special they are to us. That’s called going the extra mile.



16. I Make Great First Impressions I ensure a great first impression every time through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My appearance • The appearance of my area • Following “clean as you go” throughout the building 	17. I Stay Flexible When responding to customer requests, I ensure each customer is satisfied by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking questions to learn more • Determining the customer’s needs • Thinking of creative ways to help them 	18. I provide service graciously I am more than my job. I care for every customer by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being prepared to assist • Showing that I am genuinely glad to help them • Demonstrating that I genuinely care about them accomplishing their goals 	19. I Do More I am empowered to serve our customers by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting upon opportunities to do more than is asked • Going the extra mile whenever possible—to make the customer feel special • Being a capable problem solver 	20. I show Genuine Appreciation I show genuine appreciation by thanking each customer for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the library • Sharing feedback with us
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DISCUSSION STARTERS:

No one wants to hear “no” when asking for something, but frequently people do. We want our customers to feel that we respond to their problems or requests in a friendly and flexible way, even when it is an unusual request. When we are successful at this, customers feel special and come back for more.

What does it mean to find creative ways to say yes?

Something to think about. . .

The Power of Empowerment

Generally there is a lack of one critical element of customer service: empowerment. You can take many steps and implement many programs in an attempt to ensure that your customers are satisfied and loyal, but if you don't have empowered employees, everything else you've done is worthless.

Empowerment is defined this way: It's doing whatever is necessary, on the spot, to take care of the customer. It is bending and breaking the rules to ensure the customer is satisfied. Most companies spend a fortune on marketing and advertising in order to get customers in the door when they would be much better off if they gave their employees the authority to make decisions that will enhance their image, and customer loyalty.

The purpose of empowerment is to create an experience so remarkable that you wow the customer, who then goes out and tells 20 other people about her wonderful experience with your organization. The magic with empowerment occurs when a frontline employee effectively and efficiently handles a customer's problem without having to move it up the ladder, which frustrates the customer and costs the company more in time and money.

You cannot underestimate the power of empowerment. It will give your business an edge over your competitors and have a huge-and positive-impact on your bottom line. But empowerment just doesn't happen. In fact, getting employees to make empowered decisions is the single most difficult thing to ever try to accomplish. Why? Because they fear empowerment. They think they will be fired or reprimanded if they make an empowered decision. Or they think they will be forced to pay for whatever they gave a customer as compensation for a problem he experienced with the company.

Managers also fear empowerment. They think their roles will be diminished if employees aren't required to run to them for every decision. What they don't realize is that when they allow employees to make empowered decisions, they will have more time to focus on other issues.

And if you don't have service you won't have customers. You can develop a team of empowered employees by taking the following steps:

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Train employees in the art of customer service. This is a key element of empowerment. When employees are trained and empowered to handle customer complaints, they not only will maintain customer loyalty, they will restore it when customers experience a problem with the organization. Train employees and then trust them to take good care of your customers

Eliminate policies and procedures that get in the way of great customer service. They are major roadblocks. Employees, however, love them because they're safe. When employees rely on policies and procedures, they don't have to make decisions. But, the more difficult you make it for customers to do business with you, the more customers you will lose.

Reinforce the importance of empowerment. Talk about it and the role it plays in ensuring the success of the organization. Let employees know that it is OK to make a mistake in the process of ensuring that the customer is satisfied.

Recognize empowered employees. Celebrate the empowered actions of your employees. Give them a round of applause in front of their peers. Make heroes of your empowered employees.

Empowerment is the key to customer service. You can't have a successful business without providing exceptional customer service-and you can't provide exceptional customer service without empowering your employees. You must put the customer first, be responsive to your customers' needs, and be resourceful in meeting those needs.

Empowered employees-especially frontline employees who have more contact with your customers than anyone else in the company-will separate the organization from the rest of the pack. They are the magnets that will draw customers through your doors and keep them coming back.



DISCUSSION STARTERS:

'I Want to Speak to a Supervisor!'

A young man working for a Big Boss made an expensive mistake his first week on the job. At the end of the week the young man cleaned out his desk and packed up his things to leave.

The big boss asked, 'And just what do you think you are doing now?'

'I'm leaving,' said the young man. 'I made such an expensive mistake, surely you don't want me to come back here again next week.'

'Are you kidding?' exclaimed the Big Boss. 'I just spent a small fortune educating you. You'd better come back next week and show me what you learned.'

Have you ever asked a frontline service provider for something special and been told, 'Sorry, company policy. The answer is NO!'

Have you ever asked to speak with the supervisor and found the answer soon changed to YES?

When this happens (and it does all over the world) how do you feel about the company? Do you respect the organization more, or less?

How do you feel about the supervisor? Do you admire their use of authority, or feel pity for the frontline staff they overrule?

How do you think the frontline service provider feels? (And whose rule was he following in the first place when he said, 'The answer is NO.'?)



Did you Know?

Empowerment works for your customer, staff and organization. Customers get what they want done quickly and done right. The staff becomes more positive and professional. The organization earns a reputation (and loyal customers) no amount of advertising can buy. What are some of the things staff cannot do for customers without first getting a manager's approval? What could be gained if staff could act immediately?

Staff Recognition

It takes energy and commitment to deliver consistently uplifting service. Praise is the spark that lights the fire. Frequent recognition is the fuel that keeps the fire burning. Use plenty of both to keep the climate warm for your co-workers and the customers they serve.