THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT

Michael Steinmacher
Director, Barr Memorial Library
Fort Knox, Kentucky
IS THE CUSTOMER **ALWAYS** RIGHT?

• It’s probably safe to assume that the customer is right as much as you are when you’re the customer

• The customer is always the customer. And it’s your job to help them always feel right

• 20% of our customers account for 80% of our business
A PATRON BY ANY OTHER NAME?

“When we choose to refer to our patrons as 'customers' we also imply that the libraries of America are now part of the glorious global market, and that we plan to peddle our wares alongside the sellers of sausages and sweets on the sidewalks of trade. Terminological innovations signals ideological transformation.”

Teresa Portilla Omidsalar & Mahmoud Omidsalar

• Choice of terminology
WHAT’S AT STAKE IN EVERY INTERACTION?

• If you achieve 95% customer satisfaction, you still have 50 customers out of every 1000 walking away dissatisfied

• You are in the experience business, and you cannot, no matter what you do, completely change a bad one

“On average... Satisfied customers tell 5 people about good service they receive. Dissatisfied customers tell 10 people about bad service received.”

Hal Mather
THE GOLD STANDARD OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

“To win today, you have to delight and astound your customers - with products and services that far exceed their expectations.”

Tom Peters

• People don’t buy stuff; they buy for the experience
• More than about free content
• Give them what they want – and more
• Remember that the customer is not the enemy
• Adopt a “yes” mentality
• Libraries must go beyond delivering product or service
AN INSIDE OUT APPROACH

• Easy to let customer service take a back seat
• Internal customers
• It must start at the top of the organization and work its way down
• You work in the trenches
• Army TMO and OPEX
THE DISNEY METHOD

- Give every member of your organization a chance to dream, and tap into the creativity those dreams embody
- Stand firm on your beliefs and principles
- Treat your customers like guests
- Support, empower, and reward employees
- Build long-term relationships with key suppliers and partners
- Dare to take calculated risks in order to bring innovative ideas to fruition
- Train extensively and constantly reinforce the company’s culture
- Align long-term vision with short-term execution
- Use the storyboarding technique to solve planning and communication problems
- Pay close attention to detail

Bill Capodagli and Lynn Jackson
GROWING CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Ground new employees in expectations
- Vested interest
- Yields employees who do better from the start
- Increases value to employers
- Have the veterans be the trainers
- Create a climate in your library that supports change
- No idea is too outlandish
- What are the external customers requesting?
- Focus on small details
- Empower the front-line employees with customer service decision-making
WHAT INTERNAL CUSTOMERS WANT

- Working conditions
- Compensation
- Achievement
- Employee involvement
- Recognition
- Staff development plans
NOW’S NOT THE TIME TO BE TIMID OR SHY

• Some librarians are afraid to publicize aggressively
• Be proactive in creating and fulfilling our customers' expectations
• Stress things that are unique about the library
• Maintain price integrity
• Check fine policies
CUSTOMER SERVICE MADE SIMPLE

• Welcome them to the library
• Smile when you greet customers
• Acknowledge customers immediately
• Remove barriers to communication
• Maintain eye contact with the customer
• Use their name
• Tell them your name
• Under promise and over deliver
• Never tell a customer what you can’t do unless you can immediately tell them what you can do
CUSTOMER SERVICE MADE SIMPLE

• Minimize the negative words
• Always thank the customer for their business
• Always invite them back
• Use your experience as a customer
• Ask customers open-ended questions
• Surprise customers with recognition
• Never make a customer wait without an explanation, apology, or alternative to waiting
• If you make a mistake dealing with a customer, admit it, apologize and move on
CUSTOMER SERVICE MADE SIMPLE

• If you find something that a regular might like, set it aside
• Don't cut customers short because your shift is going to end
• Throw in an extra
• Design a customer service survey
• Shop the competition
COMPLAINTS:
MAKING LEMONADE OUT OF LEMONS

• Complainers are great; give you an opportunity to fix things rather than take business elsewhere
• If you make specific changes as a result of feedback from a customer, send a follow-up note telling them about what you’ve done
• ICE comments
• People tell us all the time what they like and don’t like
• Listen to them
• Staff’s use of good judgment
THE DIFFICULT CUSTOMER

“Treat every customer like a person. When we categorize people - problem patron, angry mother, deadbeat borrower, greedy computer user - we feel free to ignore their feelings and their messages and transforms ourselves into a hall monitors or victims.”

Karen Hyman

- As long as they are not abusive, let them vent
- Be agreeable
- Ask the customer to identify the solution they would like
- Don’t blame
- Give patrons with complaints your undivided attention
- Focus on "I" not you
- When they say “you,” hear "us"
- Adopt a two-person rule
- Remember why your organization exists
- Give what they want, not what they need
- Taking the time to listen
SERVICE LESSONS TO TAKE AWAY

One: Customers only want to resolve their problems, not hear yours

Two: Listening has nothing to do with hearing. It has everything to do with paying attention

Three: Customers only want to hear one word, "Yes!" They get mad when you give excuses why you "can't"

Four: When you make a mistake, be professional enough to apologize.

Five: When you make a commitment, take ownership enough to follow through.

Jeffrey Gitomer
U.S. ARMY FAMILY & MWR OPEX
DEFINITION OF “CUSTOMER”

C - Cheerful greeting!
U - Use positive communication!
S - Show a positive image and attitude!
T - Teamwork!
O - Own your job!
M - Make it up to the customer!
E - Extra mile!
R - Remember to thank each customer!
BIBLIOGRAPHY


