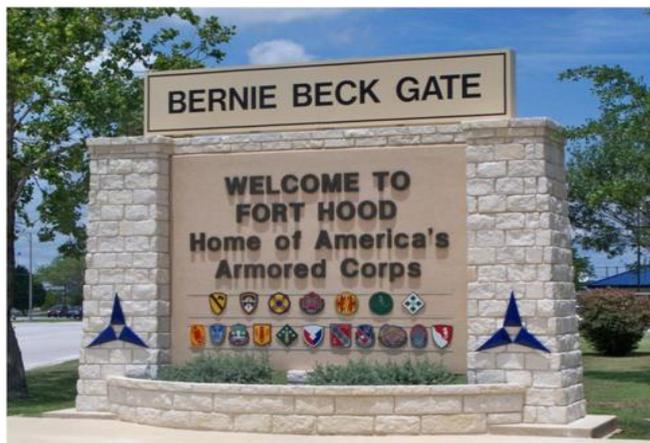


THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

March 16, 2011



FORT HOOD "THE GREAT PLACE" CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2011

"As far as customers are concerned you are the company. This is not a burden, but the core of your job. You hold in your hands the power to keep customers coming back – perhaps even to make or break the company."

- Unknown

Fort Hood Housing: Taking challenges of customer service seriously

by Dale Cowan, Fort Hood
Customer Service Officer
March 17, 2011

The Fort Hood Family Housing (Maintenance Division) managed by Lend Lease has a very important job, and fulfills a very demanding responsibility in the Fort Hood community. On-post housing has grown quite a bit in recent years. As a result, maintaining military housing is a difficult task. There are approximately 150 personnel who support the housing division, with 85 of them being actual maintenance technicians.

With that many maintenance personnel on the job, you would think that all service work orders could be taken care of almost immediately. B.J. Harger, director of maintenance, Fort Hood Family Housing, said his organization is required to maintain and service 6,430 housing units, where the occupancy rate remains approximately 98 percent.

The job is big, and often challenging. "We don't get the buy-in from residents, as if these homes were their own," Henry Gilder, a maintenance supervisor, said.

"Examples of resident buy-in would be to change filters on their air-conditioning and complete basic maintenance tasks that the average home owner or renter would complete, treating family housing units as if they were their own."

He said if residents would take more of a personal approach to solving basic maintenance issues, the housing maintenance folks could spend more time completing some of the more complex tasks. Filters and selected items are available at no cost at the Lawn and Garden Center and at local Community Centers.

"The primary message we want to get out to the Fort Hood residents is that we are truly here to help," Gilder said, "but the residents need to understand the proper maintenance procedures."

Maintenance division managers are doing everything they can to make things easier on residents of Family Housing. Their primary goal is to educate the residents, giving them the information needed to ensure they are kept aware of and abreast of Family Housing policies, procedures and changes. The maintenance message is delivered through their Facebook page during in-processing for those who are initially assigned to Fort Hood, through newsletters (maintenance tips), and via e-mail (to all family housing residents). Hard copies of

maintenance tips are provided at the local community centers. They also put out information at town-hall meetings; however, they seem to see all the same family members at the meetings.

"There is a misconception out on the street that we are not concerned or we do not respond fast enough," Gilder said. "We try and address every issue as quickly as possible, but everyone can't be first, since we have to maintain more than 6,400 homes." The highest priority goes to those residents who are on the "Controlled Environmental List" (For more information, call 287-4212).

Other maintenance issues are prioritized by the type of issue. A water leak that is flooding the house, a broken faucet that cannot be turned off, or loss of electricity to the entire house would dictate an "Emergency Response" (30 minute response time); however, an air-conditioning unit that is leaking or not working, a commode that is stopped up, a burner not working on a stove, or no hot water would dictate an "Urgent Response" (responded to within 24 hours).

(Article continued on next page)

"Customers don't expect you to be perfect. They do expect you to fix things when they go wrong."

- Donald Porter V.P., British Airways

THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

March 16, 2011

"Customers should realize that not every maintenance issue is considered an emergency situation" Gilder said. "If the response expectations are known ahead of time, our customers would not be as upset when we finally do arrive." For more information on the categories of maintenance issues, a housing resident can call Family Housing at 532-3133 or by visiting their website at www.forthoodfh.com/contact_us.

"We prefer our customers to call us immediately or go online to our maintenance website and submit a formal maintenance request at www.forthoodfh.com/maintenance_request," Gilder added. "We don't mind ICE comments, however, we can respond more quickly if the other two methods are used."

For additional information regarding the Fort Hood Family Housing Office, visit their website at www.forthoodfh.com. It's the Fort Hood Family Housing Maintenance Management's desire that your customer service experience is one that will leave a lasting positive impression on you, so that you may spread the good news to others, that they, too, may have the same positive experience.

You can always tell them what a wonderful job they are doing by submitting an online comment card to their service provider account on the ICE System.

"People don't want to communicate with an organization or a computer. They want to talk to a real, live, responsive, responsible person who will listen and help them get satisfaction."
- Theo Michelson, State Farm

Why is the ICE System so hard to navigate?

The ICE System is a quick way for customers to get their feedback to customer service representatives; however, locating the correct service provider account is not always all that easy. Below are three ways the ICE System allows customers to locate comments:

1. The easiest:

At the very top right hand side, the customer will see "Service Provider Search:" with a text box and a "GO" button right next to it. Here, the customer can type in a word (such as housing) and all service provider accounts with that word in the title will come up. This is the easiest and quickest method to locate a service provider to comment about.

2. Fairly easy:

By alphabetical listing: The customer can scroll down and click on "Show all the service providers for Ft Hood." This will provide a listing of all services in alphabetical order and in most cases grouped by garrison directorate or agencies external to the garrison directorates, such as AAFES, the hospital and dental facilities.

3. The hardest:

By category: On the Fort Hood Main ICE Page, you will find a paragraph that states: "To find a service provider you wish to rate, click on the service category below that best

describes the service/product, or enter the name or location in the service provider search field at the top right of the page and click the Go button." Although this is the most prominent feature on ICE, it's the hardest to navigate.

Here, a service provider can be located if the customer knows what category the service falls under. This is NOT always the most "user friendly" method if the customer is not familiar with all the different categories and what services might fall into each category; they may find it very difficult to locate the appropriate comment card.

Note: If a customer cannot locate a specific service provider to make a comment about, there is a service titled: [Service Provider Not Listed \(Comments that do not apply to other providers\) \(BLDG 1001\)](#). Here, the customer can make a comment and the Fort Hood Customer Service Officer will move the comment to the appropriate service.

As always, for questions regarding the ICE Program, please call your Customer Service Officer at 254-288-6260 or 254-258-2744 or email at dale.cowan@conus.army.mil.

"Don't try to tell the customer what he wants. If you want to be smart, be smart in the shower. Then get out, go to work and serve the customer!"
- Gene Buckley, Sikorsky

THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

March 16, 2011

Easy Ways to Improve Your Customer Service

When it comes to improving your service, customers want some important things from your Customer Service Representatives.

A commonly quoted statistic says that only 7% of what people attend to or note when someone is talking to them is based on the actual words used. The other 93% comes from tone of voice and body language.

There are a number of ways a CSR shows that they care. Tone of voice and listening are the most important.

Consider for a moment someone saying something complementary to you but his or her body and eyes are facing away from you.

Would you feel complimented? Not very likely. Or if the words are complimentary but the tone of voice is sarcastic and cold, would you feel complimented? Again, not likely!

If the tone of voice or body language 'says' something different from the words we are hearing, we normally don't believe the words. Tone and body language trump the words.

Our ears don't close. So technically we can hear anything that is said within hearing distance. But of course, we are not always paying attention and 'listening'.

To make a customer feel listened to, the CSR must do more than little vocal acknowledgments. After all, I'll bet you have done your share of head nodding while someone was talking only to find that your mind

was somewhere else and you didn't pay enough attention. You may have been forced to say, "Could you repeat that?"

You have to want to really hear. You can do that by maintaining eye contact as much as possible (and appropriate for the culture) and making sure you understand what is being said so that you can paraphrase afterwards. Paraphrasing does not mean repeating what was said. Paraphrasing is summarizing and putting it into your own words, followed by, "Did I get that right?"

This process affords the customer the opportunity to correct any misunderstanding and feel extraordinarily listened to.

Offer options. The second thing a customer with a problem wants is to be offered options so they can choose. A customer feels in more control of a situation when the CSR is able to say, "I can do this or that, which would work out best for you?"

Too often the CSR says something about company policy or rules. Why does that rile customers? It is because no one wants to feel like they are just like everyone else. They want to feel special. They want to know that the problem and its resolution is important and especially that they are important to your company.

Company policies in their mind are for the average customers, for everyone else, not them. Make them feel special and important. Give them a choice between two or three solutions and ask what would work

best for them.

Sometimes you might even do a bit of brainstorming to come up with more than one possible solution. If you do this with the customer he will feel more commitment to the chosen solution, and is much more likely to rate your company's customer service at the top of the scale. Better yet, he will tell his friends that your company's product or service is exceptional and recommend that they choose your offerings.

"If you want to be creative in your company, your career, your life, all it takes is one easy step... the extra one. When you encounter a familiar plan, you just ask one question: What ELSE could we do?"

*- Dale Dauten
Insurance*

What Ever Happened To Customer Service?

In the "old days", when many stores in numerous industries were what we would consider "mom and pop" stores, whenever you entered the store, you were greeted by your name, and often you would enjoy some personal time conversing with the owner.

In today's world of few small stores and many large stores, much of that personal touch is ignored, and there seems to have been a departure from the concept of serving the customer and his needs.

(continued on next page)

THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

March 16, 2011

In my town, there are a number of cleaners, some large and some much smaller. While the larger ones are often lower priced and have faster turnaround time, I still prefer using a small "Chinese Laundry" that has been in this area since 1947. Every time you go in, they know who you are and they chit-chat just enough (enough to be friendly and welcoming while not so much as to waste your time).

As you enter, even before you hand in your claim ticket, they are already retrieving your cleaning, and pay particular attention to detail. While I would be very hesitant to bring some of my better custom made shirts to the other cleaners, I don't hesitate to bring my shirts here. They combine superior customer service with quality.

When I go into my favorite cell phone store in town, they fully understand and cater to my needs. They are patient when I don't understand something or when one of my kids invariably lose or destroy their phone. They never try to "nickel and dime" me to death, and I never hesitate to refer others to them.

Contrast that with the cell phone store nightmare stories that I have heard from others where someone tells me about the great "deal" they were offered, only to vehemently complain shortly thereafter when the inevitable complication or problem occurs.

I know that my store, which has been in business far longer than

most in its industry, does more business, more repeat business, and is more successful than most of the others. Their commitment to their customers is what sets them apart from the rest.

Many of us have heard auto mechanic horror stories, how someone was either lied to, overcharged, charged for something that wasn't needed or done, or given shoddy service.

Again, in my town, I have been fortunate enough to have found an honest mechanic who stands behind his work, and goes the extra mile for his customers. While my mechanic may or may not always be the least expensive, to me having the peace of mind and honest service is far more important than shopping around simply for price. Why aren't there more like these?

All of us have gone into stores, offices, department stores, warehouse stores, etc., where we are either unable to find any assistance, or the assistance is rude, pushy or otherwise unpleasant.

Smart stores, regardless of their size, understand the importance of customer service, yet few make it the priority it is.

"Being on par in terms of price and quality only gets you into the game. Service wins the game."

- Tony Alessandra

Just think about that the next time you are placed on hold with a recording that tells you to type in your account number, etc., only to be asked all that same information once you are "lucky" enough to get a live person on the other end of the line.

You might just ask yourself: "What ever happened to customer service?"

Richard Brody Senior Consultant with RGB Consultation Services, an Ecobroker, a Licensed Buyers Agent (LBA) and Licensed Salesperson in

"The true leaders serves. Serves people. Serves their best interests, and in doing so will not always be popular, may not always impress. But because true leaders are motivated by loving concern than a desire for personal glory, they are willing to pay the price."

- Eugene B. Habecker



Author: Dale W. Cowan
Management Analyst, PAIO
Hood.pao.cms@conus.army.mil
(254) 288-6260