

THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

December 15, 2011



FORT HOOD IS STILL "THE GREAT PLACE"

"THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY BEGINS AT FORT HOOD"



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Seven Helpful Tips on how to be an effective ICE Manager:

Tip #1: *Know your role.* ICE Managers are expected to know how to deal with customers and how to respond effectively to feedback - both positive and negative. In most jobs on Fort Hood which provide a service to our Soldiers, their Family members and other civilians, customer service is out foundation and as ICE Managers, a strong foundation equates to a strong customer service relationship.

Tip #2: *Establish a personal relationship with your customers.* Get personal with your customers and let them know you actually care. Conduct periodic follow-ups to see how they are doing. Whether you want to accept it or not, your customers are the reason you exist.

Tip #3: *Be knowledgeable of the services you provide to your customers.* There's nothing worse for a customer than to have to deal with someone that does not know their job. Know all aspects of the service(s) you provide and if there are some things that are not clear to you, get clarification. Customers expect you to be the Subject Matter Expert. Be technically proficient at what you do!



Tip #4: *You cannot solve the World's Problems.* Customer service is NOT about *solving* everyone's problems, it's about *addressing* them! Get to the root of the problem and address the causes. Solving a customer's problems is a by-product of addressing them. Understand that you are NOT going to be able to make everyone happy; it's the nature of the business. You must let the customer know that you want to help, but at the same time, make them aware of the power and authority you have.

Tip #5: *Do not prescribe to the captive audience mentality.* Yes, in most cases your customers do not have a choice but to come to you as some of the services they use are not available outside the gates of Fort Hood; however, they are still your customers and they are still the reason you are employed. Treat them as if your paycheck depends on it.

Tip #6: *Provide a thorough explanation.* A big part of addressing a problem is to make the customer aware of policies, procedures, regulations, etc. There are certain things you can do and certain things you cannot, so provide a thorough explanation. The worst thing to do is to make statements such as "That's just the way it is and I cannot change it."

Tip #7: *No Customer Contact Information Provided.* One of the most prominent questions I get from managers is how do I respond to the customer if they fail to leave contact information. It's a valid question. When a customer provides feedback and has identified an issue, but they do not leave contact information, it's a manager's job to address the issue, not the customer. All the necessary information needed to adequately address an issue may not be available, so you must work with what you have. It may be that you do not have enough information to address the issue. However, you still have an issue and it's your job to address it as best as you can. This may be an issue that other customers have experienced and it may be something you or your supervisors might want to take a hard look at. Put yourself in the customer's shoes.

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Recognition on a personal level.

Each week, I identify selected personnel that I recommend to the Garrison and Installation Commanders for personal recognition. This recognition is for CSRs (Customer Service Representatives) that go above and beyond the call of duty to provide excellent customer service. Here are some great examples:

CPAC: Mrs. Samantha Lardy has been working with me diligently since the day we first made contact via email while I was still employed with Hale Koa Hotel in Hawaii. As a military spouse it is very hard to obtain and maintain continuous employment and income due to constant moves. Mrs. Lardy was the first and only person during my five-year career as a NAF civilian and my fourteen years as a military spouse, to have informed me of my eligibility for the PPP program and of the program itself. As a result I have been placed in a temporary –one-year – full time position and have for the first time in my career maintained income! Mrs. Lardy is continuing to work with me in my effort to obtain permanent, full time employment. I am immensely grateful to her for her hard work and dedication to military families of Fort Hood and United States Army worldwide. She selflessly shares information, responds to emails promptly and even assists in coordinating inquiries with other CPAC staff members. Mrs. Lardy is a true asset to the Fort Hood Garrison and the CPAC team. Her work touches military families Army wide!

DAO: **Michael Nelson** of the 21 Cav, S4 shop on Hood AAF was extremely helpful today and should be recognized for his dedication and work ethics. The Celebration of Love Event on Hood AAF will take place in the near future and the President of the organization and myself went to the S4 shop to sign out keys for the hangar. Mr. Nelson came to our aid and was extremely helpful in obtaining the needed keys and creating the paper work for signatures to make the process go smooth. He did this on his lunch hour! Mr. Nelson's work values and dedication is the reason Fort Hood calls itself "the

great place"! Please make sure he gets recognized for this kind act that was greatly appreciated.

DOL, Central Turn-In Point: I would like to commend **Paul Layman** who works at the DOL LZ Phantom. I work at CRSP and I send commercial trucks to the LZ Phantom quite often to pick up Demobing Units' equipment to ship back to their Home Station. Whenever I contact Paul to advise a truck is on the way, he is always very courteous and more than willing to help. If I ever have questions about the equipment when ordering the commercial trucks, he will go out of his way to get the information I need. On more than one occasion Paul has stayed past his quitting time to load trucks that showed up late for pick up. There was one time a truck came late, it was the day before a long holiday weekend and Paul stayed late to load the truck so the driver would not be stuck here the whole weekend and holiday. Paul's Customer Service Skills are an excellent example of what everyone should strive to provide at Fort Hood. He is GREAT to work with.

CYSS, School Age Program: Upon arrival each and every day **Mrs. Regina Collins** and the staff at the Venable Village Before and After School Program have done nothing but exceed our expectations. Although Mrs. Collins is not directly involved with the placement of infant aged care Mrs. Collins took the time to explain and promote on post child care to my wife and I, leading us to enroll our infant child into Ft. Hood CDC. Although the wait was a little long I feel very comfortable with my son attending Ft. Hood CDC. Mrs. Collins professionalism was very appreciated and upon completing orientation at Ft. Hood CDC I understand why she is so passionate about child care on post. I can assure that the CDC's located on Ft. Hood are far above any child care that we have toured in the surrounding area. Thank You, Mrs. Regina Collins and Staff keep up the great work.

**YOU'RE ONLY AS GOOD
AS YOUR CUSTOMER
SAY YOU ARE!**

CYSS, Family Child Care: I am a spouse of a deployed soldier and had been having trouble finding an FCC provider to take care of my daughter while I go to school for a couple hours a day. One of your providers told me they don't even take deployment hours and tried to charge me regular price. I spoke with a friend and she recommended **Saskia Warner** and I have to say I'm very impressed with the care and attention she gives my child. She is learning so much and it shows when she comes home. She even takes the time to tell me daily what they are working on and how I can help reinforce what she is learning at daycare. My child is only there hourly but she gets so much out of the time she is there. She is very reliable and always prepared and ready to accept my child without making me feel like it's an inconvenience for her. I just wanted to say it was such a blessing to find someone I can trust my child with and is happy to see her and always professional. If there is any way she can be recognized for doing a great job for military family and in my case, being an answered prayer for spouses with love ones not home I hope she does.

DOL, Personal Property: Just a note to recognize the outstanding support provided by **Adriana Saldana**, Ft. Hood Transportation counselor. She took the time to prepare all the documents for my Partial DITY and HHG shipment and patiently explained the whole process. Fantastic attitude and genuine concern for my issues. Reflects great credit on the Transportation Team

ACS, Relocation Readiness Program: **Mr. Ernest J. Dudley** was highly motivated in terms of customer service. He exceeded the standard and was very courteous and had a tremendous impact with my PCS move and ensuring I was very satisfied and had the required information. I recommend a small promotion for taking care of all Soldiers in his care...above and beyond the call of duty. Again, thank you for making a difference one Soldier at a time.

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Education Services Division: To whom it may concern, my name is Wade and I called for education counseling. First of all, I am no longer stationed at Fort Hood. I called **Ms. Doris Williams** for education advice because she is straight-forward and that is what I like most. I have talked and will continue to speak with her in the future. Doris is an invaluable component that serves the Soldiers in a tremendous way. I am very glad that I met her while stationed at Fort Hood. She is one of the reasons why I have continued to take courses and ultimately achieving a short term goal. Now I am, again seeking her guidance and educational mentorship in my next educational quest. Thank you, Ms. Williams. You're outstanding!!!!

Visual Information Services Branch: **William Bunce** is a credit to Fort Bliss. While I was there he went above and beyond to get Soldiers the photos they needed. As a CSM with 24 years of service I have seen many labs and he is the most professional Employee I have seen. I have seen brand new Studios with every option but they hold nothing to the simple and kind hearted worker at this lab. It was the first time in 24 years of service I went home and told my family about any photo studio I attended. The building is an older one but William makes you feel like you are in a five star studio.

CYSS, Comanche Child Development Center: To whom it may concern, My son has been a student at Comanche CDC for 4 years. I have had my share of keeping him out of school for different reasons. This one particular time I kept my son out of class **Mrs Angie Heidt** the new front desk clerk called me, she stated her reason for calling was that she had noticed she hadn't seen my son and I at Comanche and she was checking on us. In all my years of bring my son to CDC and keeping him out I had never received a call like that. Please ICE with helping me in recognizing Mrs. Angie for going above and beyond the call of duty.

(end of recognition examples)

Customer Service Skills List---

Providing good customer service is mandatory for any organization that aims to promote customer loyalty by ensuring the highest level of service that one could possibly expect. Customer delight should be the focus and concern of every Customer Service Representative since customers are the biggest assets of any organization; remains true even on an Army Installation. Some people may have a natural flair for customer service while others may have to put in special efforts to ensure that they develop the necessary customer handling skills – through various training programs or online classes.

The following customer service job skills are indispensable to serve the consumers and ensure that they develop an inclination to revisit the service provider because they are happy with their previous experience.

Empathy

Having the ability to empathize with the customers can go a long way in creating a positive impact. This skill is especially useful when the consumer feels cheated on account of having purchased a defective product as an example. Sometimes, customers may feel let down and blame the store if the said product does not deliver all that was promised. In a situation like this, a CSR (Customer Service Representative) may not always be able to resolve the matter since store policies may not allow a refund. The customer may only be given the option of exchanging the product for a different item. This may anger the consumer who may prefer hard cash. In this situation, a skilled customer service representative should be able to sympathize with the customer and try his/her level best to resolve the situation within the limits and power they have been given. **Empathy** is the capacity to recognize and, to some extent, share feelings (such as sadness or happiness) that are being experienced by another.
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Tact and Patience

The aforementioned situation can be considered in order to understand the importance of being tactful in uncomfortable situations. A representative, who finds himself/herself at the receiving end, should be tactful and patient. Being defensive is not advisable since this may further anger the consumer. The appropriate approach would be to talk to a supervisor and convince him/her of the prudence of retaining a customer even at the expense of bending a few rules (not advocating disregarding regulations here). After all, a satisfied customer can help promote the organization through word of mouth. An example of bending the rules a little might be to extend a deadline for an application or something of this nature.

Good Negotiation Skills

A customer service representative should have good negotiation skills. For instance, let's assume that a person works at a car dealership and is negotiating the price of the car with a potential buyer. The buyer should not feel as if he/she is being ripped off. Sometimes, this may be inevitable especially when both parties are trying really hard to push forth their case. A good negotiator will make the customer feel that the latter got the better deal despite driving a hard bargain for the dealership. This brings us to the importance of being able to understand the needs of the consumer. Most of the services we provide on Fort Hood do not allow for negotiations; however, the principle remains intact – make the customer feel as though they got a good deal. They should feel good about the products or services they are receiving so they can go out and promote your organization. We want our Soldiers and their Family members to feel as though their Quality of Life is important to us, why? Because it should be!

Good at Assessment

A skilled representative is able to understand the needs of the customer by asking just the right kind of questions. Probing questions may be appropriate to get to the crux of the issue, although one needs to ask just the right questions to assess the needs of the customer. A customer service representative, who knows what the customer desires, will be able to market their products and services effectively. The customer will also feel comfortable with someone who knows exactly what he/she wants.

Hopefully, the above information will help you as a CSR get acquainted with good customer service skills. Tips and pointers can only guide one in the right direction. Ultimately, it's up to the representative to figure out whether he/she has the right skill set.

(most of the information contained in this article was extracted from an article written by Aparna Lyer on Buzzle.com.)



ABOUT OUR GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE!



What is a Customer Service Representative?

A customer service representative acts as an interface between the customers and the service provider by attending to their queries and handling any issues or complaints. Large companies, especially those operating in the field of finance, banking and insurance, felt the need to set up call centers in various parts of the world to expedite the process of handling queries and resolving complaints at an inexpensive price.

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Customer Service Representative Job Description, Duties and Responsibilities

A job description of a customer service representative can be summed up in the following words: A customer service representative is expected to provide superior customer service. Job descriptions vary depending upon the place of work. For instance, a customer service representative, who is working at a finance center, may be responsible for handling queries pay problems, starting and stopping allotments, savings bonds, etc., thus rendering the necessary customer service. The job description may also include a myriad of other responsibilities associated to handling pay issues. A CSR in most cases is the first person the customer comes in contact with, either in person or on the phone or even through Email. As first impressions are lasting impressions, a CSR should make every effort to impress the customer on the first try. They may never get another chance to win this customer back and that may translate into losing many other customers.

CSRs are the first line of defense that any organization has when it comes to customer service and their actions are vital company success!



"You can trust our money back guarantee. Just send back the unused portion of our product and we'll send back the unused portion of your money!"

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"Thank you for calling our Customer Service Department. This call may be recorded for our new CD, America's Funniest Tantrums."

How to Deal with Customers...

The experience of dealing with you should be pleasurable, nice and a unique one for permanent customer retention. Never compromise on the quality of the product or services, as everyone wants to buy items or services which are really good for the money which is being spent. Avoid deceiving the customers in the matters related to quality of the product and services you provide as this can drive away the customers permanently.

How To Deal With Customers Over The Phone?

Learning how to deal with customers over the phone is very essential for those CSRs whose day-to-day business activities involve a lot of telephone contacts and conversations. While talking with customers on the phone, be patient and respond well to the queries of your clients. Speak only when the other party finishes talking, to avoid confusion and misinterpretation of data or other related problems. Be calm, even if the person speaking with you over the phone speaks arrogantly or hurls abuses at you. If you reciprocate by hurling abuses at him, there will be no real difference between you and him. Make the person realize his folly by not compromising on your business ethics. Try to give maximum possible information over the phone and speak clearly while dealing with customers over the phone. These are the keys to good customer service.

How To Deal With Angry And Abusive Customers?

Your customers might be angry with you if they are not satisfied with the customer service you have provided them. You should know how to deal with angry customers. Take charge of the situation and explain the customers what exactly went wrong, and assure them that such a thing will not happen again. Apologize, if it is really your fault. Having the knowledge of how to deal with abusive customers, will help you protect and improve your image as a businessman. (end of article)

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"If you are calling from a touch-tone phone, press 1. If you are calling from a rotary phone, please hang up, then go invent a time machine to take you into the 21st century. When you get there, buy a touch-tone phone, call back and press 1."



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