

THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

March 20, 2012



FORT HOOD IS STILL "THE GREAT PLACE" "THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY BEGINS AT FORT HOOD"

The information contained in this newsletter is researched and provided by the Fort Hood Customer Service Officer, a Management Analyst of the Plans, Analysis and Integration Office, a Special Staff to the Garrison Commander.

Service Starts with Relationships. Outstanding service starts with solid relationships. Below are nine ways to strengthen relationships with customers, while becoming a friendlier person:

1. Don't criticize, condemn, or complain.
2. Give honest, sincere appreciation.
3. Arouse in the other person an eager want.
4. Become genuinely interested in other people.
5. Smile.
6. Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.
7. Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.
8. Talk in terms of the other person's interests.
9. Make the other person feel important and do it sincerely.

Complaint Resolution Process. Having a process to resolve complaints helps assure that we deal with the emotional and practical aspects of the issue.

1. **Greet:** Always answer the phone or greet people in person as though you are happy to hear from them. Begin in a friendly way. This is easy to say, but can be difficult to do. We need to be able to "live in day-tight compartments" and separate previous negative experiences from this customer contact.
2. **Listen:** We often get the same kinds of complaints, so it becomes challenging to really listen to people. Give them an opportunity to vent some of their frustration. Be empathetic. Listen for facts and feelings. Resist the temptation to start responding too quickly. Show signs of active listening, like brief interjections or clarifying questions.
3. **Questions:** Ask questions to clarify the concern. Again, we need to resist responding until we understand people and their issues.
 - a. Elementary questions capture the basic facts of the problem. This gives us an opportunity to take some of the emotion out of the complaint.
 - b. Elaborative questions gather more details. This gives the customer a chance to expand on their issues and feelings. These questions should be relatively short, to encourage the customer to talk more.
 - c. Evaluative questions help us gain an understanding of the severity of the issue, in the mind of the customer. This is also where we evaluate what will satisfy the customer.
4. **Empathize:** Find a point of agreement with the person. This does not necessarily mean that we agree with the complaint. This is where we show the customer that we heard and understood their concern, and we recognize that it is important to them.

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5. **Address the Issue:** Now that the emotional issues have been addressed, do everything in your power to resolve the practical aspects of the complaint. Take responsibility for the actions of your organization. This is your opportunity to turn a lemon into lemonade. People who have their problems successfully resolved tend to continue to do business with you.
 6. **Test Questions:** Ask questions to test how well you have resolved the emotional and practical sides of the complaint. Give the customer another opportunity to talk. Be a good listener.
 7. **Offer Additional Help:** Ask what else you can do for this customer. This allows an opportunity to turn the conversation away from the complaint, which makes it easier to end on a positive note.
 8. **Follow Through:** Often, complaints cannot be resolved completely on the first point of contact. If you need to get back to the customer, do so quickly and thoroughly. Even if the complaint has been resolved, create a reason to contact the customer again. For example, find a way to give added value. Also, look for ways to solve the root causes of problems within your organization.
- Information extracted from Dale Carnegie & Associates, Inc., *Quick Tips for Outstanding Service*

Resolving Customer Complaints.

Guidelines for resolving complaints:

1. Don't take it personally.
2. Listen empathetically.
3. Use the customer's name.
4. Show respect for their point of view.
5. Take ownership of the problem.
6. Avoid citing corporate guidelines or policies.
7. Create an opportunity to be a hero.
8. Treat the diseases, not the symptoms. *(see more on page 5)*

Dealing with Irate Customers.

Keeping these principles in mind will help us to improve, rather than deteriorate the situation with the customer.

1. Stay calm. Try to remain diplomatic and polite. Getting angry will only make the customer angrier.
2. Try to see things from the caller's point of view. Perhaps you would feel as upset as they are, given the same situation.
3. Thank the person for raising the concern and do it sincerely. Emphasize the importance of satisfied customers to you and your organization.

4. Listen for understanding. Sometimes the irate caller just wants someone to listen to their story, even if you are unable to help them.
5. Ask questions to get their facts and feelings. Listen to learn rather than just preparing your response. Don't respond too quickly.
6. Find points of agreement with their concerns. Establish common ground to show the person you are listening.
7. Always show a willingness to resolve the problem or conflict. Make the resolution seem as easy as possible.
8. Be genuine and show your personality. Respond as an understanding friend rather than citing policies.
9. Be firm but understanding with your answers.
10. As a last resort, offer to have your supervisor talk to the caller. Your supervisor may say the same things as you, but sometimes hearing it from someone else has a positive effect on the customer.
11. No one has to put up with customers who belittle or berate them. Remove yourself from the situation and get the supervisor.

Telephone Courtesy.

1. Push your personality through the phone.
2. Be conversational.
3. Use the customer's name.
4. Give your full name.
5. Listen for understanding.
6. Ask open-ended questions.
7. Allow the person time to think and speak.
8. Fill the silence when appropriate.
9. Be a responsive listener.
10. Smile.
11. Call instead of using e-mail.
12. Take ownership. Don't blame others.
13. Stand up when you can.
14. Ask permission before using speaker phone.
15. Speak at the same rate as the other person.
16. Pause between ideas for clarity.
17. Always thank the caller.

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The Phunnies:

Proper Pronunciation: I bought a pint of Häagen-Dazs ice cream at the supermarket. As the cashier rang it up, I asked, "How do you pronounce that?" Speaking slowly and distinctly, he said, "Four dollars and seventy-nine cents."

Trash Service: Instead of saying, "And here's your receipt," cashiers should say, "Will you throw this away for me?"

Time for a new job: Scene: A phone conversation between a client and me—an art director. Me: Hi. I was wondering if you received the invoice I sent? Client: Yes, I received it, but I am not going to pay you yet. Me: Why not? Was something wrong? Client: No, I don't need to use your design yet, so I will pay you when I use it. Me: Well, I still need to get paid now. If a plumber fixes your toilet, you don't tell him you will pay him as soon as you need to go to the bathroom, do you? Client: That's disgusting! My bathroom habits are none of your business, and as soon as I use what you sent me, you will get paid!

Menu Options: A customer pulled up to my drive-through window at the fast-food restaurant where I work and requested something from the lunch menu. "I'm sorry, but it's 10:15," I told her. "We're only serving breakfast now." After thinking it over, she asked, "Do you have anything on your breakfast menu that tastes like lunch?"

Overseas Help: Days after we invaded Marja, Afghanistan, one of my Marines found out his wife hadn't paid the cell phone bill. He called the company and asked how he could settle up.

"You can go to Western Union and place a money order," the billing agent told him. Ma'am, I'm in Marja, Afghanistan," he explained. "We don't have Western Unions." "No problem. You can also go to Walmart."

In Canadian: Scene: A gas station in Canada. Customer: Excuse me. Why won't my debit card work on the pump? Owner: Are you using an American card? Customer: Yes. Owner: American cards don't work at the pump. Customer: You should put up a sign. Owner: We did, above the card slot. Customer: Oh. Well, I don't read Canadian.

Scrambled Words	Customer Service Word Scramble
iaetdttu	_____
ecsriev	_____
wmkterao	_____
lesim	_____
tuoacnmemic	_____
nstlie	_____
esskndin	_____
lirstepboyisin	_____
muetrco	_____
nceexcleel	_____
prtcvoaei	_____

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A Process to Add Value:

1. Ask Questions: Effective questions help us and the buyer see additional opportunities:

a. Elementary Questions determine basic information about use levels, time frames, features required, user needs, technical specifications, etc.

b. Elaborative Questions unearth more details like sense of urgency, undiscovered needs, additional uses for the solution, etc.

c. Evaluative Questions test the waters to see if the customer is receptive to paying for added value.

2. Open the Door: Say something brief to get favorable attention and help open the customer's mind to options.

- "Some of our customers appreciate ..."
- "Did you know about the benefits of ..."
- "You could save some time by ..."
- "Here is a way to save some money ..."
- "Would you like to reduce some aggravation by ..."

3. Present Added Value: Tell the customer a specific benefit they can receive and the investment needed.

4. Test Question: These are brief questions to see how the customer feels about making the additional investment. For example:

- "What do you think?"
- "How would this help you?"
- "How do you like the extra benefits?"
- "How will this give you a return on your investment?"

Creating Loyal Customers

Sixty-eight percent of customers leave because of what they perceive as indifference from the merchant or someone within the merchant's organization. They feel unappreciated, unimportant, and taken-for-granted. (Source: Research by Dan S. Kennedy)

Today's customer is more educated, better prepared, and has more alternatives than at any other time. Given the complexity of the marketplace, it is not enough to merely satisfy your customers. You must turn them into fans, who will not only remain loyal to your product or service, but who will spread the good word about your company. You need to exceed expectations, show customers you care, and provide exceptional customer service. You need every good word you can get in this turbulent market!

Challenges to achieving high levels of customer focus and loyalty generally fall under one or more of the following areas:

P Process: How your company or organization operates on a daily basis. This includes how your company communicates and aligns the features and value of the product or service with your customers' expectations.

R Roles: Who does what in your company or organization? Your employees must agree on tasks and responsibilities and hold employees accountable to those priorities.

I Interpersonal Issues: How your customer service personnel get along with each other and with other departments. This includes their attitude, teamwork, and loyalty.

D Direction: How your company defines and communicates its overall and departmental vision and mission.

E External Pressures: In addition to market conditions, other sources of pressure include the availability of resources such as time and money. You may or may not be in control of the availability of these resources.

Keys to creating top-notch customer service are: **BE SURE!**

B Broad product knowledge through insights into what your product or service can and cannot do.

E Extreme desire to help. Show your goodwill, passion, and eagerness to please.

S Sincere interest in your customer's situation. Don't assume the customer is simply being unreasonable when they may have a very good reason to be upset.

U Understand customer expectations, which may be extremely demanding in these challenging times.

R Respect for the customer's point of view.

E Empowered with authority to provide answers, solutions, and any other help.



"So a house salad for the lady, and for the gentleman, whatever has fallen on the floor."

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Resolving Customer Complaints

Complaints are a necessary part of doing business, and you can expect even MORE complaints in today's market. Customers are becoming increasingly choosy about how they spend their limited available cash. When they make a decision to purchase a product or service, they expect excellent customer service to accompany that purchase.

Some people who complain will be difficult to please, but if your company can develop a consistent procedure employees can use for resolving complaints, you are one important step closer to assuring that you deal with the emotional and practical aspects of customer service. These seven steps should form the core of your customer complaint resolution process.

1. Greet

Always answer the phone or greet people in person as though you are happy to hear from them. Begin in a friendly way. This first step can be more difficult than it sounds. You need to be able to separate previous negative customer service and daily life experiences from your present customer contact.

2. Listen

In customer service, you often hear the same kinds of complaints, so it can be challenging to give each customer's complaint your full attention. If you can truly listen, however, and give each customer an opportunity to vent some frustration, your customer will appreciate the special attention. Be empathetic. Listen for facts and feelings. Show signs of active listening.

3. Questions

Ask questions to clarify your customer's concerns. Again, you need to resist responding until you understand your customer and their issues -- even if you're familiar with

that type of concern. Use these three types of questions to gain a comprehensive understanding of your customer's issue.

- o Elementary questions capture the basic facts of the problem. These questions give you an opportunity to take some of the emotion out of the customer's experience and complaint.

- o Elaborative questions gather more details. These questions give the customer a chance to expand on their issues and feelings. These questions should be relatively short but inquisitive to encourage the customer to talk more about their concerns.

- o Evaluative questions help you determine how severely this issue affects the customer. This is also where you evaluate what you can do to satisfy the customer.

4. Empathize

Find a point of agreement with the customer. This does not necessarily mean that you agree with the complaint, but only that you are able to find a common ground. This is where you show the customer that you heard and understood their concern and that you recognize that this issue is important to them.

5. Address the Issue

Now that you have addressed and helped diffuse some of the complaint's emotional issues, do everything in your power to resolve the practical aspects. Take responsibility for your organization's role in the customer's dissatisfaction. This is your opportunity to turn a lemon into lemonade. People who have their problems successfully resolved tend to choose to do business with those companies again.

6. Test Questions

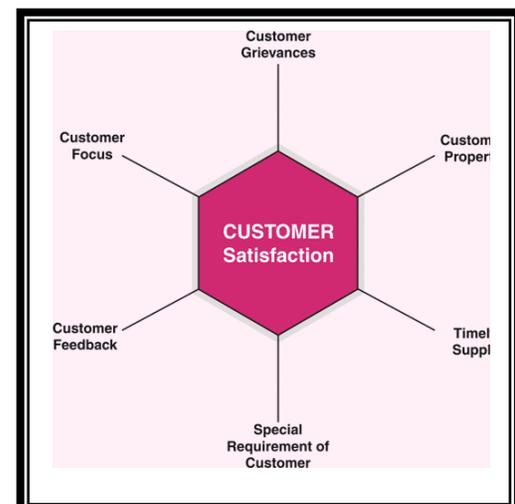
Ask questions to test how well you have resolved the emotional and practical sides of the complaint. If the customer is satisfied with the

resolution, this will make it easier to end the experience on a positive note.

7. Follow Through

Often, complaints cannot be resolved completely on the first point of contact. If you need to get back to the customer, do so quickly and be thorough in your response. Even if the complaint has been resolved, create a reason to contact the customer again.

For example, find a way to offer added value to the customer's experience with the company. Also, look for ways to solve the root cause of problems within your organization. If you can solve some root causes of common complaints, you will experience fewer complaints.



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Employee of the Month



FORT HOOD
Family and MWR



Ms. Donna Ingram, CYSS

Ms. Ingram has been with Child, Youth & School Services for many years and has served as a vital member of the team. She is the Lead Administrative Assistant for the Division, which includes hundreds of employees. As the organization has expanded and evolved over the years, including making major moves from building to building, growing its physical and customer base, adding new programs and discarding old programs, Ms. Ingram has been a critical part of it all. She is a multi-tasking wizard and despite the fact that all administrative and personnel actions for this 600 person division filter through her, she is always cheerful, helpful and kind. Donna is the go to person in the Division. She provides exceptional customer service to internal and external customers. She even recently diverted a tragedy when she recognized an employee in crisis, discovered he was carrying a weapon, and called the MPs. Due to her attention to detail and focus on those around her, this incident ended without injuries. Donna Ingram is the kind of person everyone wants on their team. She is hard working, loyal, innovative and caring. CYSS simply would not be the same without her.

Scrambled Words

Customer Service Word Scramble Solution

attitude	_ a _ t _ t _ i _ t _ u _ d _ e _
service	_ s _ e _ r _ v _ i _ c _ e _
teamwork	_ t _ e _ a _ m _ w _ o _ r _ k _
smile	_ s _ m _ i _ l _ e _
communicate	_ c _ o _ m _ m _ u _ n _ i _ c _ a _ t _ e _
listen	_ l _ i _ s _ t _ e _ n _
kindness	_ k _ i _ n _ d _ n _ e _ s _ s _
responsibility	_ r _ e _ s _ p _ o _ n _ s _ i _ b _ i _ l _ i _ t _ y _
customer	_ c _ u _ s _ t _ o _ m _ e _ r _
excellence	_ e _ x _ c _ e _ l _ l _ e _ n _ c _ e _
proactive	_ p _ r _ o _ a _ c _ t _ i _ v _ e _



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