

THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

May 11, 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.

Customer Service Kiosks are strategically placed throughout Fort Hood and are a fast and easy way to submit your feedback without having to fill out a comment card. When you visit some of the high-traffic areas on Fort Hood, look for one. When using the Army One-Stop Kiosks, you can also obtain information about the community. Tell us how we are doing today!

USE OUR KIOSKS FOR.....

ONE-STOP SHOPPING

FOR

FORT HOOD

COMMUNITY INFORMATION



Looking for Fort Hood information?

- Can't find what you are looking for?
- Need help locating something?
- Need a helping hand?
- Need additional information?

Find it all at one of our many kiosks!

Army Civilian Training and Leader Development:

To improve access to information and increase participation in Army Civilian training and leader development opportunities, the Army G-3/5/7 Civilian Training and Leader Development Division launched a one-stop website consolidating information about career program, occupational and functional training, competitive professional development and leader development opportunities, as well as application procedures and course registration links. Check it out at <http://www.civiliantraining.army.mil>.

The division has also established a Face Book page as an additional communication channel with Army Civilians and Leaders. Become a

Fan today at <http://www.facebook.com/armyciviliantraining> to stay up-to-date on course application deadlines, Civilian leader development tips and more.



PAIO Customer Service Face Book Page:

As the Army transitions toward the use of Social Media Platforms to get the "Army Message" out to everyone, the United States Army Garrison, Fort Hood Plans, Analysis and Integration office has jumped on board and now has a customer Service Face Book Page.

The page was designed to share customer service related information with anyone who can benefit from the information provided.

If anyone has good information they would like to share that's customer service related, please send the information to me or post it on the Face Book page, being careful to comply with all rules and regulations that govern an "official" Army webpage. The Face Book Web Page can be found at: <http://www.facebook.com/FortHoodCustomerService>

THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

May 11, 2012

Soliciting Feedback:

When you solicit feedback from others, you invite them to point out the strengths and weaknesses in your customer service performance or the services you provide. While you may wish to hear nothing but positive remarks, it's helpful to consider the positive side of criticism. Honest feedback provides you with the information you need for advancement. Different methods of soliciting feedback encourage this honesty. Consider your professional environment and the relationship that you have with those you want feedback from to help you choose the best approach.

#1: Look at your online ICE Comment Cards and create simple "yes" or "no" questions such as, "Did we meet your expectations for your visit today?" or with ratings from one to five with questions such as, "How well did I meet your customer service expectations today?" With this question, ask the customer to elaborate on their answer by providing positive or negative details about their customer service experience.

#2: Ensure there are ICE comment cards and a well marked suggestion box in the office so that people can write and submit their ideas/ feedback at any time. Always invite your customers to provide their feedback, whether it is good or bad.

#3: This is out of the ordinary, but try requesting an appointment with a person if you're interested in their specific and individual feedback only and tell them you're interested in a performance or product review at the time of scheduling. Prepare a list of open-ended questions such as, "How do you think the general public regards the service we provide?" Ask them for any additional insight they may have for improvements and thank them for giving their valuable time.

#4: Solicit feedback from your employees: Begin your regularly scheduled meeting by asking your employees that you are interested in their opinions and invite them to share their thoughts on policies, procedures and other areas that touch on customer service as well as the specific services your organization provides. Call on specific employees during the discussions or pause periodically to invite thoughts from the group. Get everyone involved and let them know they are important and part of the team. Sometimes it takes some real prodding to get employees to open up, but once they see their input is valuable and taken seriously, you may be surprised what you hear!

#5: Thank people for their input and ask for suggestions about how to improve if they note something negative. This provides more insight for you and helps them feel comfortable about providing more feedback in the future. You want return customers, even if they are giving you negative feedback.

Helpful Tips for soliciting feedback:

1. Request an explanation for opinions to better understand the person's perspective. You need all the pieces of the puzzle to get a clear picture.
2. Repeat key points back to the person as they speak to show you're listening and to help you remember the information.
3. Take notes during conversations so that you can refer to their feedback later.
4. Accept that people will submit feedback anonymously because they may think their answers could jeopardize their position or relationship with you.

Article by Dale Cowan

What is Customer Service... REALLY?

As the Fort Hood Customer Service Officer and ICE Site Manager, I see on a daily basis prime examples of customer service in all the comments that I view. I also provide much information in both my monthly newsletters as well on our Face Book page in regards to how customer service is defined by different experts. However, I would also like to provide a real life example of a situation where excellent customer was provided.

Let me start by saying that providing great customer service is not always about resolving a customer's issue; it's about addressing the customer's issue appropriately. In a recent ICE Comment, a customer submitted his feedback in regards to motorcycle safety for Soldiers. This ICE comment and the III Corps Safety Officer's response caught my eye as something I would like to share with others.

Background: The customer (Morris Hill) submitted a comment on the ICE Website to the Garrison Safety Office. Since it involved the III Corps Safety Office, I contacted the III Corps Safety Office (Mr. Jim Doherty) so he could address the issue.

Customer Comment:

"With the recent growing of motorcycle accidents, I constantly keep asking myself why and how it happened and most of all, what was the rider thinking, or were they? Granted, not every accident is the fault of the rider but I have to wonder IF the other guy could have seen them, would it have changed the situation?"

(continued on next page)

THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

May 11, 2012

Recently, a soldier's spouse took notice of the Highly Visible motorcycle jacket I was wearing. So much so she wanted a picture to show her spouse. She mentioned what a tragedy it was to hear that there were so many motorcycle accidents recently. I agreed with her and again wondered what could have been done to possibly prevent it?

My suggestion would be to take 1 day, or 2, or a week if needed, and have a bike safety rodeo that promotes safety. Develop different events throughout the day, maybe different stations around post, (round robin) that riders can participate in that involve safety and good riding skills. An instructor at each stationed event evaluates their skill and points out good and bad techniques. Once they complete each station, the instructor stamps a passport book the rider takes with them.

Once they have successfully completed all the events, they could receive a voucher that would offer them a significant discount, or get free, safety gear from the different vendors. I'm sure there are many soldiers that ride that cannot either afford the better safety gear that's out there or might need to replace or upgrade their safety gear for better visibility.

Bottom line is finding something that appeals to the soldier, something they would want and want to use. If it sparks their interest and gets their attention, long enough for them to think twice about safety, that might make the difference for them and maybe someone else."

Me: OK, here's a customer that has really put some thought into the feedback he provided and it's apparent that he really cares. His comment is more of a suggestion than a complaint; however, the comment was met with a pretty good response that demonstrates good customer service...

Mr. Jim Doherty responds:

"Mr. Morris, Thanks your suggestion and comments.

III Corps and Fort Hood strongly promotes safety motorcycle operations. The intent is for Soldiers to enjoy their riding experience accident free.

III Corps has an established motorcycle safety program to promote Soldier while riding a motorcycle. Besides required training, unit motorcycle mentors conduct check rides to evaluate Soldier riding skills and develop individual riding improvement plans. Additionally units conduct quarterly mentorship rides to reinforce safety riding practices. The next installation ride is scheduled for 17 May. An estimated 1,000 riders plan to participate.

Fort Hood is participating in the Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month. The III Corps Command and CSM will endorse a Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month proclamation prior to the 17 May Phantom Thunder motorcycle ride.

A bike rodeo would be a grand idea. However, I think at the installation level it might be too great of a challenge. It is estimated that the number for Fort Hood motorcycle riders is greater than 5,000. I believe your suggestion has merits at the battalion and/or company level.

Once again, thank you for your insight. We are always looking for ways to enhance Soldier safety."

Me: I was quite impressed with the response provided back to the customer and apparently he was as well, based on the return email he sent to us both. This is not only a picture perfect example of excellent customer service, it's an example of a senior level service manager providing a detailed response to an important issue.

Response back from the customer:

"Thanks for your response and attention. I realize there are many registered riders on post and it would be quite a challenge to put something together to make it happen, at least more than 1 or 2 days.

An event that large would certainly gain a lot of attention; not only for bike riders but to all drivers. But, that was my intent, to make it large enough so it would get people's attention and maybe change their thinking.

I hope brigades/Battalion's/ Company's would do something like it, other than the group rides. Group rides are always great to do, but motorcycle mentors/leaders don't get to see/evaluate rider's true skills, such as practicing skills to avoid potentially dangerous situations."

Need I say anything more?

Permission was obtained from both parties to use their comments in this newsletter.



**ARE THESE
WORDS YOU ARE
FAMILIAR WITH?**

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May 11, 2012

Employees of the Month



Mr. Marshall hails from Houston, Texas. He joined the Army in 1979 and served tours in the US, Germany, Kosovo, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Somalia, and Haiti. He retired in 2008 from Fort Stewart as a Command Sergeant Major.

Mr. Marshall joined the US Army Garrison, Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, Deployment Readiness and Ceremonies Branch in 2009 as an Events Coordinator and then in 2011 was promoted to Operations Specialist.

Mr. Marshall's commitment to excellence is unmatched. He earned the Blood Donor Award for his support to the Robertson Blood Center. Customer satisfaction is his number one priority. He upholds and enforces Affirmative Action and EEO regulations to the letter and in spirit. He constantly receives high remarks for customer service excellence and received two Letters of Commendation from the Senior Command for customer service excellence.

There are many great employees that support our Fort Hood customers on a daily basis. We need to take the time to both recognize for their efforts in making "The Great Place" what it is... and to let others across the installation know who they are and what they are doing!



Ms. Forrest Wall hails from the state of North Carolina. She joined the US Army in 1981 and served tours in the United States, Germany, and Korea. She retired in 2003 as a Master Sergeant in 1CD at Fort Hood.

Ms. Wall has served as a Force Modernization Analyst at US Army Garrison Fort Hood, Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security, Plans and Operations Division, Force Management Branch since 2009.

She is the Force Modernization Team's lead analyst for coordinating the fielding of the US Army's newest systems at Fort Hood, to include the Stryker family of vehicles valued at over \$772M to the 3d Cavalry Regiment and the MQ-1C Gray Eagle Unmanned Aircraft System valued at over \$55M to E Company, 227TH Aviation Battalion.

Her intense involvement, coordination skills, and problem-solving abilities are exceptional. These traits ensure the successful fielding of new equipment for our Soldiers.

Her performance constantly provides a superb example of how one dedicated employee, working as a valuable team member, can make a substantial impact on the mission of preparing and caring for our Soldiers at Fort Hood.



Mr. Victor Hage hails from St. Francis, Minnesota. He joined the US Army in 1984 and served tours in the US, Korea, Iraq and Kuwait. Mr. Hage retired in 2004 from Fort Hood as a Staff Sergeant and then joined the US Army Garrison, Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, Force Protection Branch in 2005 as an Antiterrorism Security Specialist.

His dedication to Force Protection earned him the 2012 Army Antiterrorism Honor Roll from Department of the Army for his extraordinary resourcefulness and initiative in supporting the Army Antiterrorism Program. His constant customer service support to III Corps and US Army Garrison Fort Hood are beyond reproach.

Mr. Hage enjoys a reputation throughout Fort Hood as an unwavering customer service advocate.

CUSTOMER SERVICE
If We Don't Take Care Of The Customer Somebody Else Will.

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May 11, 2012

Customer Service – Why Does it Matter?

How many of you have ever gone in to an establishment, such as a restaurant, with a certain expectation of what you would receive? Unfortunately, as customers, we don't always get what we ordered.



Good customer service is when an individual perceives that an organization has served him/her, by not just meeting but exceeding their expectations.



Too many organizations define customer service from the "business" perspective instead of from the "customer" perspective. I encourage each of you to define customer service in your organization. Agree on a definition unique to your service and make it visible to both employees and customers.

In a service organization, we are only as good as our customers say we are. So how do we know how well we are doing?

1. Determine your current levels of customer satisfaction: What

methods does your organization have in place that provides indicators of your levels of customer satisfaction? Yes, there's the ICE System, but are you doing anything else?

2. Improve deficiencies and address issues: This is huge. If an organization does not implement change for the better, it will become stagnant. Identify deficiencies, tackle them head on and make the appropriate changes.

3. Monitor your levels of customer satisfaction: Customer satisfaction changes over time and if this is not monitored, it can have a very bad impact on the organization. Customer satisfaction levels should always be discussed in staff meetings and other executive forums. Both the leaders and the employees of the organization must be conscious of changes in customer satisfaction.

4. Improve deficiencies and address issues: Wait, isn't this step already addressed in #2 above? Yes it is! The fact is, this step is part of a continuous process that evolves with time and is ever-changing.

Did you know that body language accounts for about 55% of how you communicate?



The remaining 45% of communication is comprised of the actual words used and the tone of the speaker. Effective communication is directly linked to better understanding your customer's needs and meeting their needs and expectations.

Though body language accounts for a significant part of communication, words and verbal tone can also make or break the message you are trying to relay to a customer.

I am sure that each of us can think of examples when we were the customer and perceived an employee as rude because of the tone they used with us. How did this impact the quality of service provided to you? What was your perception of that employee AND the organization they worked for?

Tips for great customer service:

Take pride in the service you provide. When an employee takes pride in their work, the service they provide is better – this goes for attitude, quality and timeliness of service, as well as ability to quickly correct mistakes.

Provide what you promise (don't give lip service). It is easy to get caught up in the moment and say things like; "I will ensure" they get this/that. Make sure the customer knows that you will do everything in your power to serve them BUT be careful not to commit to something you may not be able to deliver.

Be knowledgeable in your service (know the service). Customers expect the person behind the counter or on the phone to be knowledgeable in the service they provide. Be sure you meet that expectation by learning everything you can about your work area.

Make it easy to receive your service (unnecessary procedures). Most of our customers do not have a "Home Depot" mentality. They come to us because they need assistance, not because they can do it on their own. Have you ever been told to go "find it online"? It takes only a few minutes to look up a phone number, draw out directions, etc.

(continued on next page)

THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

May 11, 2012

Know your customer base and what they want. To best serve your customers, you have to know who they are. The constituent group they belong to may impact what their expectation is of your service.

Handle customer requests with the same **sense of urgency** that you would expect as a customer. Timeliness of service is critical. When you are the customer, you expect the service provider to be professional, timely and efficient.

The **customer in front of you is the priority**. The customer in front of you is always the priority over a ringing phone, exterior noise, other customers in line, e-mail, etc.

*****Never argue** with a customer, treat all customers with **courtesy** and **respect**. Arguing with a customer indicates that you have lost control of the situation. No matter how or what a customer says, we should always maintain a professional composure. Exhibiting courtesy and respect keeps us in the clear and in control.

Call customers by name. Use the customer's name as often as possible. If you don't catch the name then simply ask – this adds a personal touch. Do you have an example of when people have greeted you by name? How did that impact your perception of them or their company?

Remember – **you** are the service **provider**. Remember, this is *your* job and *you* are expected to provide the service. The customer has come to you because they need your service, not because they can do the job themselves.

Greet every customer with a friendly smile. Greet every customer with a smile, even if you do not feel like it. Smiles are

contagious; the more you use them the more they wear off on you and those around you!

Make eye contact. Making eye contact shows that you are engaged and paying attention.

Take ownership of situations that may arise (do not pass the "buck"). Take ownership of any "less than ideal" situations and handle them in a professional and positive manner. To a great extent, you have the ability to control a situation. Not yelling back at a customer who is upset, for example, prevents escalation of the problem into an argument. If you need to get assistance from a supervisor, take down the customer's contact info in order to get back with them later, but, be sure to follow up later on with a phone call or email.

Always be willing to "find" the answer. If you are not able to answer something for a customer then let them know that you will find the answer and get back with them within a reasonable and specified time frame.

Go the extra mile. This is your opportunity to "exceed" instead of simply "meeting" the customer's needs - that extra mile is what people remember and tell their friends about. There are a number of ways you can do this . . . How many of you have had an employee step away from their station to help you take something to your car or looked up a number and gave it to you instead of telling you to go online. Those little things do not take much time but they make a big difference to the customer.

Communicating "WOW" Customer Service – The Personal Touch:

Have you ever heard the phrase, "the first impression is a lasting

impression?" Just take a few minutes to think of your own experiences, I am sure it won't take you long.

If you received a service from a person who did not exhibit the bullets above, what did you think about that individual? How eager were you to visit their office again?

If you did visit again, with what preconceptions did you enter the office?

I am willing to bet that you made some assumptions about the employee.



First impressions will go a long way:

1. Be prompt and give a friendly greeting
2. Dress for success
3. Be well groomed
4. Have a positive attitude
5. Be mindful of body language and facial expressions
6. Use eye contact, interest, and sincerity
7. Use proper business language and NO acronyms

Phone Communication:

The phone is quite often the first communication between a customer and a business, which makes your phone communication skills vitally important. It's easy to get lazy on the phone; after all they can't see you. However, your customer can tell if you are listening to them.

(continued on next page)

THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

May 11, 2012

Use a prompt friendly greeting, simple and brief. Keep it simple and brief so that your customer can speak.

Answer the phone immediately or ensure a short voicemail message. Immediately answer the phone or at least provide a very short, easy-to-follow automated voicemail menu. Listen to your voicemail from the customer's perspective. Be mindful of what is easiest for them, not what is easiest for you.

Have a positive Attitude – Smile! **Are you kidding me; on the phone???** Smile! Though the person cannot see your smile through the phone I guarantee that they can read your face by the tone and words they hear.

Change the tone of your voice to reflect the conversation. "Tone of voice" is so powerful that entire classes are taught on the subject. With emergency dispatchers for example, maintaining a calm, audible, and relaxed voice can assist in reassuring a caller in need. The same tactics are helpful in any work environment.

Use proper business language – no slang, informal communication, acronyms. Always use proper business language. Very few things can subtract from your credibility as quickly as using slang, informal, and unprofessional speech. Also refrain from using acronyms since most customers will not know what they mean.

Return voicemail messages within 24 hours and state that on the actual messaging system. Even if you are personally not able, assign another employee to give a courtesy call to the customer. Getting back to the customer will really impress them and will enhance the relationship you have worked so hard to establish.

Show attentiveness by periodically responding – "yes," "I understand," etc. Have you ever been on the receiving end of a person that you knew was not listening to you? Show that you are being attentive to the caller.

Email Communication:



A popular means of communication . . . **BUT** . . . it can easily leave room for misinterpretation.

Ahhh, the many meanings of the written word! Think back to your good old high school English days for a minute. Remember reading those obscure poems where you never seemed to glean from reading the same thing your teacher did? Well, that same thing can happen between us and our customers if we do not take the proper precautions.

First and foremost, set the stage by providing a prompt response. That does not mean that you have to have the solution in 24 hours but you do need to at least respond and let the customer know the status of their inquiry.

Secondly, the same rules you learned in English class about sentence structure, grammar, and etiquette apply here. Use polite and professional business language in complete sentences and refrain from using acronyms (unless you spell them out with the first use).

A few tips to ensure your e-mail sends the right message:

1. Always return e-mails promptly (within 24 hours)

2. Be short, concise and get to the point (people tend NOT to read dissertations)

3. Use respectful business language (do not use abbreviations or acronyms; take the time to use complete and correct sentence structure; all uppercase and bold may send the wrong message!)

You might be saying,

"Well, these tips are just common sense. My employees and I practice these every single day."

Do you really?

Have you asked your customers lately?

Easy ways to gather customer feedback:

Solicit immediate feedback by asking the customer at the point of service delivery.

Inform them that they can access the ICE website from any internet capable computer.

Invite the customer to fill out a comment card while in your office.



These rules may seem like common sense because they are. Unfortunately, these details are often overlooked. Make a conscious effort to improve your customer sense stand today and make a positive difference!

(information extracted from a customer service briefing written by Dale Cowan)

THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

May 11, 2012

SPECIAL FEATURE EMPLOYEE



*Isabel Hubbard
USO Fort Hood Programs Manager*

Every day, there are people across Fort Hood who support our Soldiers and the Family Members behind the scenes. This is the case with Isabel, pictured above. I have experienced firsthand how Isabel provides excellent support, so I took the time to interview her and ask her some questions.

Isabel has worked for the USO since March of 2009 and works closely with the USO Director to provide a variety of programs to the Fort Hood Military Community. Her department coordinates with the USO Director to determine how to make each program effective and sustainable. She also coordinates with the Volunteer Manager for Manpower and executes all of the programs and services the USO offers. Each program is then evaluated exclusively to Fort Hood to determine if they are truly reaching the people they intend to reach, whether it is the Soldiers or their Families. For instance, their USO Story Time Early Literacy Workshop was a pilot

program last year, which ran for four months and has taken off with Families waiting to get in. This program targets young children (ages 0-4 years) and their parents to join us for breakfast and a story with a positive message that follows the Army Family Values, reinforced with a craft to bring home the message.

When asked how she supports the Fort Hood community in her daily job, she responded, "Every day is never the same. Our USO Center has had over 5700 visits in the last month. I'd like to think that what I do today helps and provides programs needed for this community of tomorrow. Whether it be talking to the Soldiers who come into the center to see how their day is going to asking them how can I help them, or brainstorming and thinking the impossible to bringing a new and innovative program here to Fort Hood. It's all in the details...what do I need to make this or that program successful? It's anticipating the needs of our guests before they ask. Challenging? Yep. But, we try. How do we measure success? Smiles. Genuine, unadulterated smiles. Oh and that "Thank you, Ma'am" makes it ALL worth it."

Isabel believes that USO, in its 71 years of existence, has proven itself to be a very important piece of this puzzle called Fort Hood. The USO's mission statement is "Lifting the spirits of its America's Troops and their Families." Isabel says that "We are the "reflection of a grateful nation". We are an extension of the American People. We're here to offer that smile, cold drink, something to snack on, lunch, or just a place to relax for that moment a Soldier has in his very complex, busy day." Our employees "don't pretend to know what a Soldier goes through in their career; we just want to be there to see if we can be of service to them. Why? To say thank you to them, of course." ☺

If you have not visited the Fort Hood USO Office, I would encourage you to do so. They are located right across from the III Corps Headquarters Building, right next to the old Chapel building. To find out more about the USO, their mission and what they do here on Fort Hood, visit their website at:

<http://affiliates.uso.org/forthood/>



**DON'T FORGET THAT
CUSTOMERS ARE THE
REASON WE EXIST!**



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