



**TOPIC: LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT**

**TITLE: CREATING A GREAT SERVICE CULTURE**

I recently had a great customer service experience. This was in sharp contrast to past experiences with customer service, where I was disappointed, my complaint was left unresolved, or the resolution was difficult, time-consuming and frustrating. Sound familiar? The reality is, I've had few customer service experiences to rave about.

As I look back on this great service experience, I realize that the vendor didn't do anything extraordinary. They did some very basic things, but they did them very well. That alone made the vendor stand out as different from other companies. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to stand out among one's peers, but it does require commitment and consistency to stay on top.

We all have different roles in our organizations. Some of us directly serve the client, and others serve the client indirectly through their interactions: internal departments, other vendors or suppliers, employees in the organization, etc. However, we all eventually affect the client in some way.

I'd like to share with you the service principles I observed and challenge you to look at your organization and yourself in the process.

Clear expectations

Right from the beginning, this vendor did a great job of clarifying what I could expect. They took time to explain the process to me, describe how long it would take, tell me how they'd communicate with me during the process, and clarify the procedure I should follow if I had any questions or complaints along the way.

Are your clients or your employees clear about what to expect from you?

A promise made is a promise kept

From early on, the vendor made a commitment about when my problem would be resolved, and they kept to that commitment. They did what they said they were going to do, when they said they were going to do it.

How good are you at living up to your commitments?

Follow up, follow up, and more follow up

They followed up with me on a regular basis. Even if they had nothing to report, they called just to let me know where things stood, to see if I had any questions and to reconfirm their dates and deliverables. After my problem had been resolved, they followed up to make sure I was happy with the outcome.

How well do you follow up?

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#### Professionalism through and through

I dealt with several employees of this organization, and all of them exhibited the same professionalism and commitment to great service. This includes the employee who answers the phone, the department that actually did the work and the customer service staff. It wasn't just one employee who cared; it was all of them. You could feel it in the office, when they answered the phone and in every interaction.

How consistent are you and your employees in demonstrating your values?

#### Quality inside and out

This company prides itself on quality. They have a checks-and-balance system before the product leaves their site, as well as a follow-up process to ensure that their product meets the client's expectations. Throughout this, they demonstrated repeatedly that they cared about their final product.

How good is the quality in your organization? How would your clients rate it?

#### Soliciting feedback

The organization asked for my feedback several times -- after the work began, midway through the process, and after they completed the work. They demonstrated through their actions that my feedback was important to them.

How often do you obtain feedback from your customers? Your employees?

What's interesting about this experience is that the organization that delivered this great service is an auto body shop. How my car ended up at a body shop is a story for another newsletter. Nonetheless, I've never encountered a more professional group of receptionists, mechanics, customer service reps, and store managers.

They don't have a radically different formula for delivering service; it's simply that they implement their formula better than anyone else I've encountered. That's the key to capturing and keeping your clients for life.