

The principles of quality customer service

Some of the factors you identified for successful customer service may be consistent with the following principles:

- identifying customer needs
- designing and delivering service to meet those needs
- seeking to meet and exceed customer expectations
- seeking feedback from customers
- acting on feedback to continually improve service
- communicating with customers
- having plans in place to deal with service problems.

Focus on your Customers

Developing a customer focus involves:

- understanding what customers value
- researching your customers wants, needs, working environment, structure and challenges
- measuring customer service delivery performance
- regularly gathering feedback
- communicating with customers.

Customer service charters

Many organisations develop a customer service charter that sets out the commitment the organisation has to its customers and the standard of service customers can expect, including:

- what the organisation does
- how to contact and communicate with the organisation
- the standard of service customers can expect
- customers' basic rights and responsibilities
- how they can provide feedback or make a complaint.

A personal high standard of service

As an individual, you can set a high standard of service that your customers will value and will lead to developing effective relationships and building your network.

The ways you can deliver high quality service include:

- communicating with your customers to identify their needs
- responding to customers' needs promptly
- adapting your service delivery to cater for customers' needs
- always maintaining a professional image, positive demeanor and communication
- delivering on your promises
- being punctual to all appointments.

What all customers want

What all customers are after is a quality service experience. They want their specific needs and expectations to be met and they evaluate the service received against these expectations.

Key dimensions

Research has indicated that there are five key dimensions which customers consider when evaluating service quality:¹

- **Reliability** – is the organisation dependable in providing service as promised, over time?
- **Tangibles** – what do the organisation's physical facilities, website, equipment, personnel and communication materials look like?
- **Responsiveness** – are the organisation's employees helpful and able to provide prompt service?
- **Assurance** – are service employees knowledgeable, polite, competent, and trustworthy?
- **Empathy** – does the organisation provide caring, personalised attention?

Of these five factors, reliability has consistently proven to be the most important factor in customers' judgements of service quality.

Rate out of 5 how you believe your office currently provides service against these criterions.

¹ Lovelock, C. and Wright, L. 2002. *Principles of Service Marketing and Management*, Prentice Hall, pp.266-267.