

Customer Service

Operators Day
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Lansing Michigan

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Takeaways

- What is your level of service
- Feedback
- Commitment
- Training
- Results
- Feedback

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- What is customer service?

Sometimes people use this term when they are talking about a specific department within an agency. This section of the business focuses on how to best help customers, coming up with new techniques for how to interact with the public or the customer. People who work in this department also personally address the questions or problems people might have, such as *finding issues with their water bill or explaining why the water meter needs to be changed. In either case, the general principle of positively interacting with the customer always applies.*

WisegEEK.com

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- What is your level of service to the community/customer you are serving?

We all provide customer service whether we realize it or not. Each agency has a different expectation and a differing level of service expectation. That expectation is produced by the upper echelon of the agency. As employees we strive to meet their expectation.

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- Is what you or the bosses perceive as good, good enough?
- Is what the employee delivering to the customer what the customer wants or is it what the boss wants?
- What do your customers say about your service level?

Survey your customers about what they want. “You don’t know what you don’t know.” Ask them and they will tell you. Use the information to customize your service to their desire.

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Once you have surveyed your customers and they have told you what they want, that information has to be broken down by the experts into what it really says. What you are doing in delivering the service may be good at, but is it good enough for your customers. Once the experts have reported back then the agency has to put a plan in place to meet the customers expectation.

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Commitment

The agency has to be totally committed, top down, to make changes to meet the customers expectation. Committed both fundamentally and financially to a process. It's a marriage!

We have gotten to this point based on what Customer Service is by the Book. Now I want to tell you what we did at Bloomfield Township and how it has worked out.

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The Bloomfield Township Experience

Oakland County Prosper Magazine – 2015

Bloomfield Township – “A well run community thanks to stable leadership, the township has proactively established business practices to maintain the quality of its public services and preserve the community’s distinction.”

This does not happen by accident!

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Resident Survey - Feedback

In 2005 the Township did a community wide survey asking the residents what they expected from the Township and its employees.

- Courteous to calls and inquiries
- Knowledgeable Staff
- One call, one answer, they did not want to be bounced around
- Complete and quality work product
- Follow up to make sure the request was completed

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Commitment

After reviewing the key components that were identified by the resident/customer survey, the Township made a full commitment through its Board of Trustees to implement a full customer service training program and do what was necessary to implement the program.

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Commitment

All of the Township Department Heads met with a facilitator to review the findings of the survey and chart a course forward to create a plan and implement it.

An employee committee was formed of staff personnel, no Department Heads, from each Department and Division to establish a Township wide mission statement and to implement training for all employees in the Township, 250 full time staff.

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Commitment

Mission Statement

“Bloomfield Township employees are dedicated to the highest quality of customer service delivered in a courteous and efficient manner. We will approach each day with honesty, integrity and pride in our profession. We are committed to ensuring that Bloomfield Township is a safe and desirable place to live and work.”

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Commitment

The committee established a facilitator based, 4 hour training session for all 250 Township employees. The training was held off site and everyone was fed.

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Commitment

The Committee prepared an open house where each department did a display on what they were responsible for in the Township auditorium. All employees were required to sign in and attend the program. This allowed the initiation of employees into a process where they would get an understanding of who did what and how. They were learning what they “did not know.”

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Commitment

The committee prepared a follow up to the initial training by requiring new employee orientations, welcome packets for those employees and a review of the customer service training video for all new employees. They also suggested that each Department review customer service with their staffs once a year and make changes where necessary.

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Training

In 2007 the real training began within each Department. The Department Heads were charged with finding where there was disconnects within the Departments among the employees. We established a committee within Public Works to identify problems and solutions that could be implemented. Each Division appointed a representative to meet once a week and meet a time line for completion.

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Training

As the Department Head I got to facilitate.

Began by identifying three things:

- Define Service Excellence
- Define Poor Service
- What are the Differences in Public and Private Sectors

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Define Service Excellence

Timely/Prompt

Courteous

Knowledgeable

Patient

Good communicator

Follow through

If you can't help, find someone who can

Get it done right/quality workmanship

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Define Poor Service

Uninformative

Rude

Slow/Untimely

Lack of Concern

Disrespect

“Not my job”

Poor Quality of Workmanship

No Communications with Customers

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What are the Differences in Public and Private Sectors

Customer has no choice of who to use or call

Entitlement

Availability

Regulations

Private Concerned with Profit

Public Concerned with Satisfaction

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Training

Each Department began the basics of Identifying their customers.

Preparing a Departmental set of Goals and Objectives.

Reviewing accomplishments for the past 12 months.

Prepare changes that are needed to move forward.

Prepare a Training and Safety plan so employees can better serve the customer.

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Training

Each Division was asked to identify the 3 most frequently asked questions and what the answers were to those questions.

Water Division

Inquiries about their water bill: “Why is it so damned high?”

When can we use the water after a water main break? Is it safe to drink?

How long will it take to restore my lawn after a water main break?

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Training

All the information that was gained from the basic sessions were prepared and the committee began working with that data on initiatives that would help the customers better understand each other. Our customers were identified as anyone we come in contact with inside or outside the agency. Why? Because we are the Township and any answer that is give by a Township employee is gospel, no matter what the questions, we are the Township's spokesperson.

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Results

In the end a document was developed by the Department of Public Works that outlined the mission of the Department that was specific to delivering customer service. Whether it was internal or external customers, the service delivery was to be the same. This was developed by the employees for the employees. Each employee read and signed the document.

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Customer Service Mission Statement Department of Public Works

The Department of Public Works Administrative and Field staff commits to bring our best to work each day with a positive professional attitude towards providing the highest level of service possible to our customers by:

- Listening to our customer
- Verifying the customers need
- Accepting ownership of the situations
- Identifying the action to be taken and by whom
- Follow through with the action
- Follow-up with the customer during and upon completion
- Representing the Township in a positive and professional manner

Public Works will continue to improve customer service by:

- Being knowledgeable of all our services
- Keeping the customer informed
- Learning what the level of service the customer requires
- Utilizing other resources for support

Providing a high level of maintenance and service will benefit our customers by having a positive, lasting and satisfying effect.

Staff signatures



**Michigan Section
AWWA**

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Results

In the end specific outcomes were:

- Changed the way work orders and schedules are sent to Forman – via computer using Outlook.
- Utilizing a broadband wireless connection in the field to find water and sewer locations using GIS without returning to the office. Pulls up all records that are in the mainframe while staff is in the field.
- Utilizing a Public Service central office concept to handle all public works related calls and get them out to the proper staff for resolution and recorded in the maintenance soft ware.
- Utilizing the total work force to complete tasks and cross training employees in Water and Road operations.
- Began job shadowing of office staff with field personnel.

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Communications

- List maintenance priorities for the year and get them to the field staff so they know what is to be done during the season
- Staff would like to get more detail on what is going on around the Township and within the Department. It was explained that management and supervisory staff cannot provide details if they are not aware of the questions. Everyone was encouraged to ask the questions they wanted answers to so we could provide them with information they are seeking
- Utilizing information from office and field personnel to better know what each are doing and why they are doing it
- Provide video loop on the Department so that the field staff can see what is running at Town Hall and on Cable TV
- Keeping the public better informed by producing letters to the neighborhoods when work is being done there letting them know what is going on
- Utilize more cell phones for key field personnel so they can be contacted and response times for jobs can be reduced
- Do job shadowing where the office staff spend time in the field to see what field personnel do to complete their tasks. This will better educate the office staff so they can provide more informed answers to residents
- Follow up with a Departmental meeting once each year with all employees
- Place as much information and required forms on the internet/web site to reduce calls to the office and increase availability to residents/customers during off times, weekends and holidays

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Employee Training

- The Public Works safety Committee was reestablished with a member from each Division and they meet monthly with the Administration.
- Each member is charged with doing a selected safety training session or a customer service session each month with their respective Division.
- Once each Quarter an outside trainer is brought in to do a selected training session for the whole Department.

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Follow Up

- Ask your customers/residents how you are doing and compare to where you started – survey
- Stay current with your employees on communications and information - transparent
- Be transparent by providing all communications and information to all of your customers – put it on the web site
- Let everyone know what they “didn’t know”

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Final Word

This all starts with each of you –

- The way you look, talk, listen and the quality of your work product
- Your technical systems – web site
- Reporting systems and how you use that information
- Respond to customers – return those calls, emails and listen – when you or any of your staff talk to a customer they are your representative and speak for your agency, make sure they are spreading the correct information
- Don't tell customers what you can't do, tell them what you can do
- Be transparent – there is nothing to hide – be proud of what you do and how you do it and let the customer know about that pride
- Be Responsible and Accountable for what you do and how you do it
- Empower your staff to make decisions by giving them that authority – not every decision has to pass by the boss
- Be right, not sorry

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We have a saying in the Department:

“You own it till you solve it!”

If it is a call or walks through the door it is your responsibility to get that customer an answer. Doesn't matter if it is a question about something that you are not responsible for. Follow through, get the answer and let them know what that answer is.

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Poor customer service will last for 23 years.
Good customer service will last until the next
time that customer needs service and what and
how you provide it. Doug Cartland

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- It's all about "letting the customer know what they don't know"
- It's giving them what they want
- It's committing to be professional in what you produce and do
- It's training to meet that goal
- It's providing a high quality product
- It's making sure the customer is getting what they want

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Eureka!

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