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Creating and Sustaining World-Class Customer Service

*Principles and a Framework for
Achieving World Class Customer Service*

With Jeff Russell



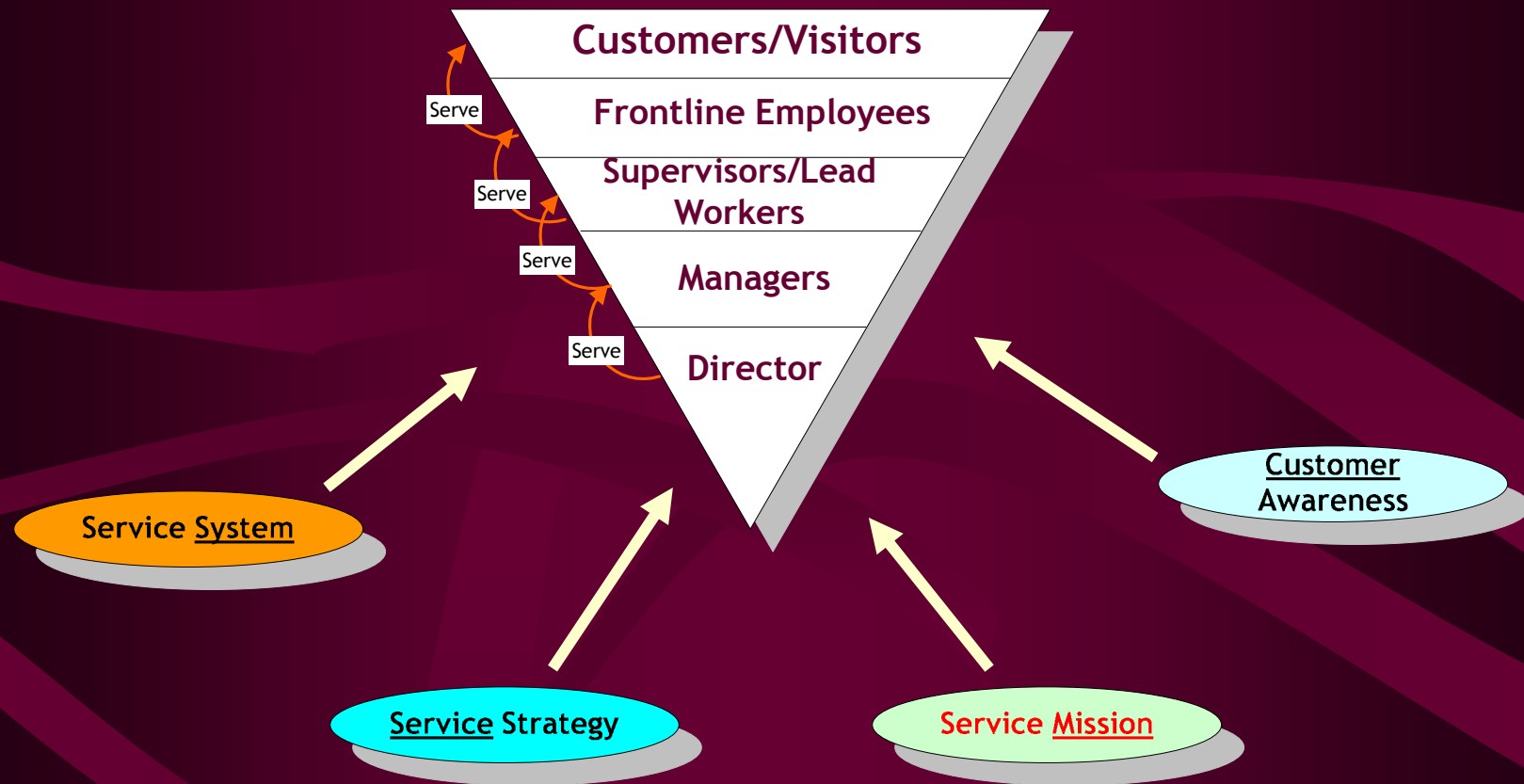
The Challenge of Customer Service

1. Customers co-produce the service they want.
2. It is produced the instant it is delivered – it can't be created in advance.
3. It can't be centrally, controlled, inspected, produced, or delivered.
4. The “product” cannot be shown or demonstrated – it can only be experienced.

The Challenge of Customer Service

5. The service cannot be recalled if it fails.
6. Quality assurance can only happen after the service is produced.
7. Delivery of the service almost always involves human interaction.
8. The more people involved in delivering the service, the less likely that the customer will be satisfied.
9. “Quality” is subjective and dynamic.

Inverting the Pyramids: The Customer-Centered Department . . .



A Customer-Centered Department

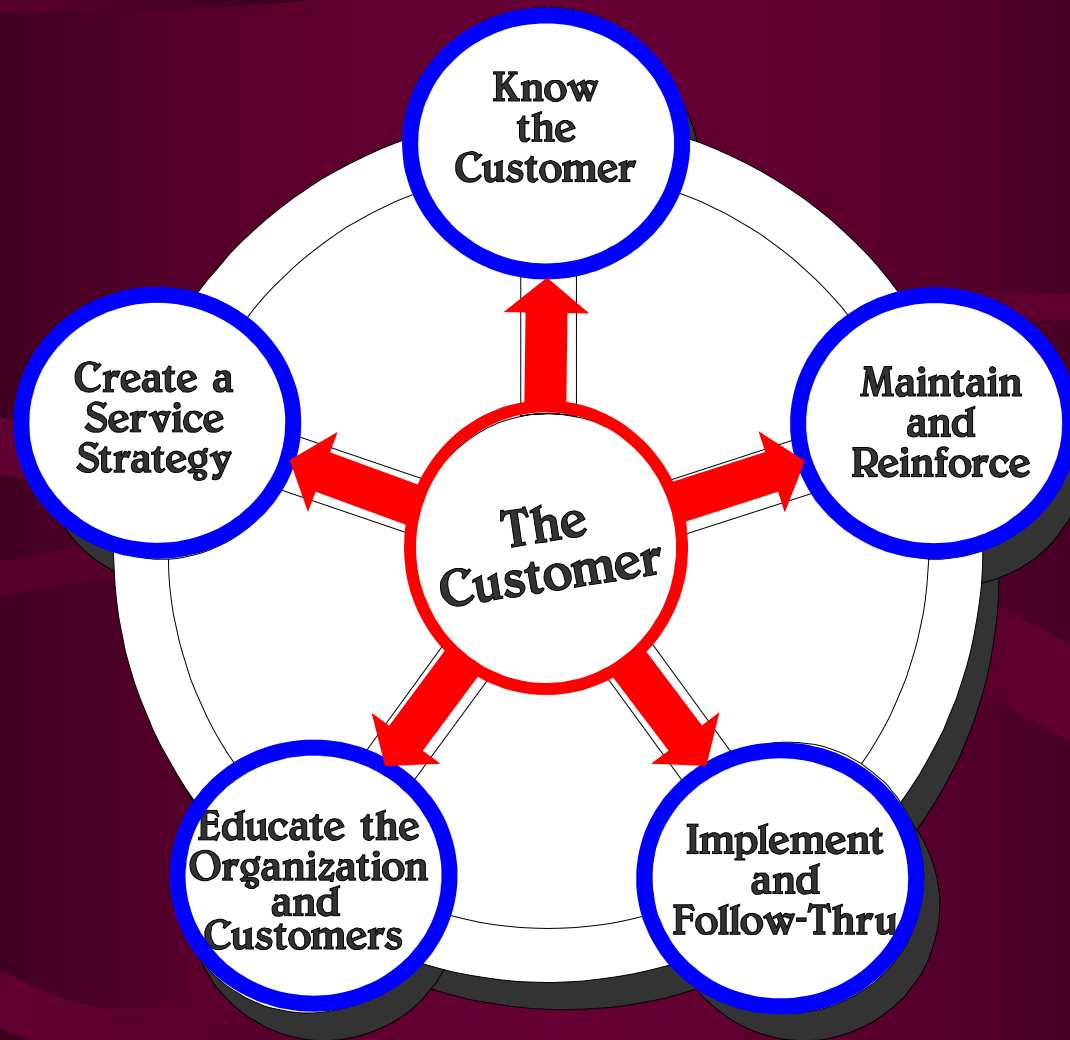


1. Know your customer.
2. Make customer service the driving force.
3. Put the front line employees in charge of the process.
4. Provide support to the front line.
5. Define a clear role for managers and supervisors
6. Use customer data to support customer service decisions
7. Strive for continuous improvement.

Our Customer Is . . .

- The most important person in our department. Without customers, there would be no need for us.
- Not a cold program statistic, but a flesh and blood human being with feelings and emotions like our own.
- Not someone to be tolerated so that we can do our thing — they ARE our thing!
- Not dependent on us, rather, we are dependent on them.
- Not an interruption of our work, but the PURPOSE of it. We are not doing them a favor by serving them. They are doing us a favor by giving us an opportunity to do so.

A Model for Customer Service



Know the Customer

1. Identify your customers and their needs/requirements.
2. Conduct interviews with individual customers.
3. Facilitate focus groups with selected customers.
4. Use written surveys.
5. Use daily interactions, incidents, trends, etc. to learn from the customer.



Create the Service Strategy

1. Define your customer service philosophy and values.

2. Develop a service mission statement.

- Who are our customers? What is important to them?
- What is our core contribution to our customers? What do we want to achieve for our customers?
- For what are we *famous* or well known from our customer's vantage point ?

3. Develop a strategic customer service plan. [What do we need to work on as an agency to achieve our customer service mission?]

- SWOT Analysis – Where are we *weak*? *Strong*? [internally/externally]
- What is our plan to address our weaknesses?
- What are our goals for service improvement?

4. Create “operational” plans for each area. [How will each team/unit/work area achieve world-class customer service?]

The Customer Service Mission:

- Describes the *structure* and *strategy* that the department will use to achieve its customer service vision.
- Describes *why the department exists* and the *value* it creates for its customer.
- Identifies the department's *aim, action, and audience.*



Educate the Organization, Customers, and Stakeholders



1. Communicate the customer service philosophy and mission to staff and customers.
2. Train managers in their role as customer service managers.
3. Train frontline employees in process improvement, assessing customer needs, communication skills, problem solving, dealing with difficult customers, etc.
4. Tell customers what they can expect and what they need to do to become a partner to great service.
5. Educate key stakeholders on the customer service mission, philosophy, and strategy (and what the agency needs for award-winning service)

Ensure Implementation and Follow-Through



1. Involve staff in developing department and personal customer service goals.
2. Build teams that are focused on customer service.
3. Create reward systems that recognize world class customer service.
4. Involve staff in “system” problem solving – What’s working/What’s not?
5. Periodically assess employee satisfaction.
6. Make adjustments based upon what you learn

Reinforce and Sustain Service Excellence

1. Continue listening to and learning from your customers.
2. Provide incentives to staff for extraordinary customer service.
3. Invest in staff training.
4. Establish performance standards – and hold people accountable.
5. Orient all employees to the customer service mission.
6. Annually review the customer service strategy.
7. Respond to what you learn from your customers and your staff.
8. Watch the competition.
9. Benchmark your effectiveness.

What the Customer Values

1. **Reliability** of the service over time.
2. **Responsiveness** to customer needs/expectations.
3. **Assurance of competent, knowledgeable, and courteous staff.**
4. **Communication and empathy.** Understanding and saying “I’m sorry.”
5. **Tangibles.** What is felt, seen, experienced.
6. **Security and confidentiality.** Trusts us to keep information about them safe, protected.

Four Levels of Customer Service



- **Generic** – The basic service that is delivered to the customer [e.g., **permit to use park facilities**]
- **Expected** – Includes benefits added to the generic level of service that the customer has come to expect [e.g., **permit granted same day of application**]
- **Augmented** – The actions you take beyond expected service to “surprise” the customer – exceeding their expectations. **What would be a possible augmented service?**
- **Potential** – The actions you take to anticipate additional or future customer needs to keep them as a customer. **What would be a potential service opportunity?**

Forging a Partnership



1. Simply listen.
2. Focus on the issue or problem, not the person.
3. Show empathy for their needs, feelings, and concerns.
4. Use “I” instead of “you” statements.
5. Don’t give commands, orders, or directives.
6. Identify positive actions that you and individual customers can take.
7. Seek to reduce defensiveness.

**If you're not serving
the customer . . . you
had better be serving
someone who is!**



Thank You!

Visit RCI Online for a copy of this PPT and a
one page handout on the Customer-
Centered Service Model

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