21st Century Customer Service

South Central Regional Library Council
June 15, 2011
Alan Kirk Gray
Schedule

• “Simple, but not easy”  One hour
  10 minute break

• The Service Matrix  One hour
  10 minute break

• Team Support  One hour
Things I expect we can agree on:
Customer Service

• All libraries say they provide good customer service [and most intend to]
Customer Service

• All libraries intend to provide good customer service
• Our patrons know what good customer service is
Customer Service

• All libraries intend to provide good customer service
• Our patrons know what good customer service is
• They have learned to expect good customer service
Customer Service

• All libraries intend to provide good customer service
• Our patrons know what good customer service is
• Our customers expect good customer service
Can we agree on this?

Saying “No” with a smile is not customer service, it’s gate-keeping
Gate-keeping isn’t an employee’s fault
It’s an administrative responsibility
If you are working with staff on how to say “no” you need to figure out how they can say “yes” more often.
So what is customer service?
“Service is:

• A flawless product
• Delivered exactly as a member wants
• In an environment of caring”
And
Setting the Table

Hospitality is the Watchword
And
Apple’s Store Philosophy

Approach customers with a personalized warm welcome

Probe politely to understand all the customer’s needs

Present a solution for the customer to take home today

Listen for and resolve any issues or concerns

End with a fond farewell and an invitation to return
21st Century Customer Service

• Is all about the basics of
  – Quality
  – Hospitality
  – Comfort
  – Convenience
21st Century Customer Service

Requires active staff engagement

To enlist patron respect
21\textsuperscript{st} Century Customer Service

It’s not defensive and careful

It’s proactive and positive
21\textsuperscript{st} Century Customer Service

It’s thoughtful and engaged

And requires full buy-in to succeed
21st Century Customer Service

It redefines success as the result of staff initiative rather than the defense of administrative policies
The customer service hierarchy

- Relationship between a customer and a library employee
- Services provided by the library to all customers
- Services provided to the community as a whole
- The Library as a good citizen of the community
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<td>• Waive fines</td>
<td>• “Break the rules on Express books”</td>
<td>• Any staff member can override any Library rule at any time</td>
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<td>• Extend due dates</td>
<td>• Accompany patrons to the stacks</td>
<td>• Arrange Non-fiction collection in “glades” to make browsing easier.</td>
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<td>• Online reserves,</td>
<td>• Call other libraries to reserve items for customers</td>
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<td>renewals and payments</td>
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<td>• 24/7 Book return</td>
<td>• Day of grace on due dates</td>
<td>• Reference by appointment</td>
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<td>• Remote access to data base resources</td>
<td>• Order any book a patron requests</td>
<td>• Provide resources to 95 book groups</td>
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<td>• Accept on-line reserves for on shelf items</td>
<td>• Circulate laptops</td>
<td>• Get just-returned items as patron waits</td>
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<td>• Widespread children’s programs adopted by schools</td>
<td>• Homework assignment forms for use by teachers</td>
<td>• Develop website-based children’s book review and commenting software for use by elementary schools for summer reading tracking</td>
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<td>• Host for local Genealogical Society collection and databases</td>
<td>• School reading lists posted on web site for on-line review and reservation</td>
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<td>• Host weekly early morning networking and job search group with all library employee time volunteered.</td>
<td>• Provide technical support to community groups, and host the web sites of 45 of the organizations</td>
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Where does the matrix lead you?

• Measure success in every transaction with a customer
• Assess the performance of every employee
• Ask every customer to evaluate service
• Determine priorities and resource allocation
Working with patrons

Every engagement between a staff member and a library user is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.
How Do You Implement Extreme Customer Service?
You get to “yes”
By getting rid of “no”
Face to Face with Patrons

• **EVERYONE** is “frontline staff”
• Success depends on first-time actions
• Take responsibility for the solution of the problem, don’t hand it off
• “It’s not your fault, but it **IS** your responsibility”
Lesson learned digging ditches

“Look around, and if you see something that needs doing, and if you know how to do it, do it.”
It starts with wanting to.....

- Hold a two-way conversation with your customers
  - At the Circulation Desk
  - At the Reference Desk
  - In a sustained reference research project
  - On the web or OPAC
  - On IM, Twitter or Facebook
  - On this webinar 😊
Leadership Planning

• Set staff members up for success by allocating resources effectively:
  – Desk time is for contact with patrons
  – Task off-desk staff to respond “virtual” reference queries when you can schedule so [Think “butt in seat”]
  – Off-desk time is for program planning and journal reading
Leadership Commitment

No staff member will ever, ever, EVER be criticized if an action they take results in better customer service.
Focus staff on success

No staff member will ever be criticized if an action they take results in better customer service.

– Front line staff take the safest option when they don’t know what to do

– Library leaders need to make sure that the safest option is the one that results in better customer service
An Overall Policy

• Make customer service the most important element of your library activities
  – Then….look at any policies that require the staff to say no, and change them
  – And…..keep looking!
Policies and Practices to Change

- Creating policies that affect all users when only a few abuse the system
- Rules on limits of service
- Rules based on the fact that “it’s our library, not yours”
- Rules just because we’ve always done it that way
- Putting out signs to substitute for staff management of library activities
Customer Service doesn’t need to cost money....

- Use positive language
- Do not reprimand users
- Listen to users and be flexible
- Place customer needs first
- Don’t substitute signage for personal engagement
Customer service builds appreciation in your community, and results in more support and more funding.
Esprit de corps – your “corporate culture”

- Staff meetings
  - Cite examples of good customer service by staff
- Bad examples from other organizations:
  - “We would never do anything like that”
- Change agents
  - Leadership by key staff, role playing, videotaping
- Who is the keeper of your “culture”? 
Customer service: the basis for every decision:

- Remind yourself: “Whose library is it?”
Whose library is it?
My Mother-in-law’s Rule

People enjoy themselves at a party if the hostess is having fun.
Power

Power is 80% taken, and 20% given
OK, now your policies are in order....
Questions to ask yourself
Danny Meyer’s 5 A’s

• How to Address Mistakes
  – Awareness
  – Acknowledge
  – Apologize
  – Act
  – Additional Generosity

“Alibi” is not one of the 5 A’s
Power to Front-line Staff

Administration needs to organize activities so that front-line staff can provide service to each person they meet
Power to Front-line Staff

Then allow front-line staff to make decisions based on what is best at that time.
Power to Front-line Staff

Don’t set up front-line staff by requiring them to *multi-task*.

* The other way of defining *multi-task*: “continuous partial attention”
Power to Front-line Staff

Set up desk schedules so that staff are doing one job and one job only: face-to-face with users

In my experience, most problems are caused by too many staff scheduled on desk
Power to Front-line Staff

Don’t set up public-facing staff schedules so they have to answer emails, twitter, read journals, do book selection, etc.

Schedule that for off-desk hours
Count your “butt in seat” reference stats and you’ll be surprised by how large the proportion is of queries that don’t need to be answered at the public reference desk.

In our experience, 24.5% of “.touches” are virtual
Front-line staff in position to

Make a difference when they understand they will be the prime engines of success.

They will then take the initiative

And, by the way, there’s been a study on how to do that.
Effectiveness

Effective team members have nine skills
Citation

Harvard Business Review
“How Bell Labs Creates Star Performers”
by Robert E. Kelley, Janet Caplan
12 pages. Publication date: Jul 01, 1993
The Nine Skills

1. Initiative
2. Networking
3. Self-management
4. Perspective
5. Followership
6. Leadership
7. Teamwork
8. Organizational Savvy
9. Show-and-Tell
Credit for the bridge metaphor:

Jack Dorsey, founder of Twitter and Square, speaking to the Square “TownSquare” meeting on his 34\textsuperscript{th} birthday.

What do we know?
Thank you

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Dewey Reorganization

• Children’s Groups
  – Concepts
  – Favorites
  – Growing Up
  – Nature
  – Celebrations
  – Transportation
  – Folk and Fairy Tales
  – Rhymes and Songs
  – Stories
  – Learn to Read

• Adult “Glades”
  – Art
  – Literature
  – Body&Soul
  – Finance
  – Home
  – Lives
  – Nature
  – Places
  – Play
  – Times
  – Work