

Quality service critical to success

Editor's note: The following article was contributed by Mel Bost, project coordinator for the project management office (PMO).

In today's project-focused environment, how you accomplish your results is every bit as important as what you accomplish.

The "how" is in the service. It's critical that each of us create a positive service experience for our customers, stakeholders and team members every day. No one can have more impact on the success of your task than you can through your attitude, skills and timely implementation. That's what service is all about.

It means you should make every "Moment of Truth" count. This moment happens when the customer meets or intersects with you and your team – physically, virtually or otherwise. Often service quality is evaluated based on customer expectations. In addition, the culture employees experience inside their own organization will be the same culture customers experience. In other words, treat everyone with equal attention, respect and courtesy. There are no exceptions.

The overriding objective in your service role is to create seamlessness in your service delivery, which simultaneously meets the following 10 dimensions of service quality:

1. Reliability involves consistency of performance and dependability. The organization performs the service right the first time and honors its promises.
2. Responsiveness concerns the willingness or readiness of employees to provide services. It involves timely responses.
3. Competence means possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service.
4. Access involves approachability and ease of contact.
5. Courtesy involves politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness.
6. Communication means keeping customers informed in a language they can understand and listening to them intently for meaning and purpose. It may mean that you will have to adjust language for different consumers – increasing the level of sophistication with a well-educated customer and speaking simply and plainly with a novice.
7. Credibility involves trustworthiness, believability and honesty. It involves having the customer's best interests at heart.
8. Security is the freedom from danger, risk or doubt. It involves:
 - **physical safety** (Will the customers materials be safe?)
 - **financial security** (Do we know what these initiatives are costing us?)
 - **confidentiality** (Are my statements or observations and conversations regarding certain issues privately held?)
9. Understanding and knowing the customer involved, making the effort to understand the customer's needs and delineating between "needs" and "expectations."
10. Tangibles include the physical evidence of your service:
 - **physical facilities for activities**
 - **appearance of personnel**
 - **tools or equipment used to provide the service** (Web Site, software application, etc.)
 - **your physical presence when the difficult decisions are being made**



Mel Bost, project coordinator for the project management office (PMO)

Make every Moment of Truth count. When was the last time you wrote a brief note to one of your customers or stakeholders asking if your efforts met their expectations? Or, let a team member know you missed them at the last meeting and that you value their input into the process? When was the last time you shared a "lesson learned" with another co-worker or team member?

That's service across the board.

Gene Batchelder says, "Our success is directly tied to the success of the businesses we support." I would like to add that our success also is tied to how well we support each other.

Mel Bost

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