

Coaching Award Winning Customer Service

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As managers and supervisors of service organizations, the goal is to meet and exceed customer expectations. However, John Naisbitt, in **Re-Inventing the Corporation**, points out that today's worker isn't automatically committed to excellence. To help our reps understand how to deliver world-class service, we must coach them on what they should be doing differently. It will demonstrate that someone cares about their development and is paying attention to them. It will also insure that they will not stagnate or become complacent.

How often is necessary?

Our recommendation is that you have a formal coaching session with each individual once a quarter and informal coaching sessions on a regular basis. A quick comment about what you just observed while walking past a rep's cubicle can be very reassuring regardless of the rep's experience level. Coaching can also come from ones peers. It does not have to be solely from the manager.

While Call centers are busy places and there are many tasks related to the job, coaching should always be a priority. The American Management Association says that when Customer Service Representatives are coached on a regular basis, their skill level improves dramatically, just like a golfer's game improves. They also become more committed to **exceeding** customer expectations in every task they perform.

How do you do it?

1. **Get to know your reps.** The more you know your reps, the more willing they are to accept feedback from you. By having lunch with them or being involved in company sponsored events, you can increase the rap-

port you have with your reps ten-fold. Realizing the value of this, some companies now require that every manager or supervisor know the birthdays, anniversaries and names of spouses and children of the people that report to them. The bottom line is that when reps see that you know them on a personal level, they feel more a part of a team effort and work hard not to disappoint.

2. **Tailor your message to your rep's type.** Instruments like the Myers Briggs Type Indicator can provide valuable insight into how people in your organization approach tasks and prefer feedback. People are either direct or indirect and open or self-contained. Knowing this is important. When we communicate using our favorite communication style, others, not of that type, might find it annoying or even distressing. For example, if you are giving feedback to a person who is a big picture person, talking to them about details and procedures can seem like nit-picking. Others who are very concerned with feelings could find you insensitive if you seemed oblivious to the number of times they have given up their family time to complete projects. Successful coaches adjust their communication strategies to the people in front of them.
3. **Give praise in public and criticism in private.** People like others to know that they are doing well. Publicly applauding the efforts of an individual can be as powerful as a monetary reward. On the other hand, when we have negative feedback to give, it is always important to do it privately so that others don't notice and to do it when there is enough time for discussion.
4. **Be concrete.** Do not speak in generalities. Avoid words like "often," "never," or "a lot." If you are asking a rep to make a particular change, be very specific about the change you would like to see augmented.
5. **Set goals.** If your organization is going to deliver world class service, everyone needs to set personal developmental goals. Just like

Continued on page 2

a musician or an athlete, reps need to know that in your organization people are always working at getting better or improving their game.

Dru Scott in her book, *Customer Satisfaction*, says that the one thing superior managers have in common is that they coach. Coaching should not be an option. It should be part of what you do as a manager. While it can seem time consuming, your job will become easier as people increase their skills. Not only will you not have to handle as many escalated calls, but your staff will be more motivated and willing to maintain a consistent high level of performance.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. To reach us, phone (847) 438-4480 or contact our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.