

The Above & Beyond Series: Customer Service Articles



The Internal Customer: Serving Those We See Every Day

Service provided to internal customers is often taken for granted. At many academic institutions students are the primary customer. Primary, however, does not mean “one and only.”

If others depend on services you provide to complete their own tasks, you are an enabler. This isn’t name-calling, but rather signifies that your colleagues are part of your customer base. These internal customers benefit from and depend on your services.

Depending on your position, the office in which you work and your job duties, you may provide services to fellow colleagues and rarely interact with students. Consider the assistant in Human Resources; s/he provides information and services to many potential customers – staff persons, prospective recruits, students, even alumni members. However, this employee is more likely to interact with employees of the college. In this case, internal customers ARE the primary customer.

Below are some tips for providing the best service possible to our internal customers (Note: you may apply all of these practices to “external” customers as well):

- How can I help you? – a classic dialogue in the service environment. Redirects the irate customer toward an accepted solution, focuses conversationalists on the task at hand, assists the wandering visitor – what more can we say? Try greeting a caller with: “Good morning. This is --- in the Office of ---. How can I help you?”
- Treat each interaction as “new” – You may see this customer on a daily basis, you may even work within inches from this person’s desk, but perform each task as though it was a new one.
- Share information or resources with internal customers. Exceed your customers’ expectations by sharing the address of a resourceful website or passing articles of professional interest their way. Include a note on the piece to tie in the topic with a project in which the customer is involved. But use restraint; resources should be specific to the customer’s needs and timely.
- Say “Thank you” and be sincere.