A GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING

CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

From Workitect’s Competency Development Guide, a 280-page, 8.5” x 11” spiral bound handbook featuring actionable tips and resources for the development of 35 competencies. Available in Kindle, iBook, and Nook versions.

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CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

Definition: Demonstrated concern for satisfying one’s external and/or internal customers.

a) Lives the business mission: to be the preferred supplier through total customer satisfaction
b) Quickly and effectively solves customer problems
c) Talks to customers (internal or external) to find out what they want and how satisfied they are with what they are getting
d) Lets customers know he/she is willing to work with them to meet their needs
e) Finds ways to measure and track customer satisfaction
f) Presents a cheerful, positive manner with customers

IMPORTANCE OF THIS COMPETENCY

Customer Orientation means focusing one’s own and one’s unit’s efforts toward meeting the needs of internal and external customers. The principle of customer orientation is at the heart of the total quality movement, which involves continuous improvement to meet and exceed customer requirements. Customer Orientation is also essential for survival in today’s increasingly competitive marketplace. Only companies that effectively meet the needs of their customers will survive.

To achieve internal effectiveness and efficiency, organizations must also ensure that individual units are responsive to the needs of their internal customers.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPING THIS COMPETENCY

This competency requires a particular orientation and attitude, rather than the extensive development of new skills. Thus the primary way to develop this competency is to put it into practice, by identifying your unit’s internal or external customers, talking to them to understand their needs, and focusing the unit’s efforts toward meeting these needs.

PRACTICING THIS COMPETENCY

- Meet with your unit to identify its major customers. List the customers who receive the work outputs from your group. Analyze and prioritize the list. Identify who are your most important customers and who will become your major customers over the next 2 - 3 years.
- Set up meetings with your key customers. Ask them how satisfied they are with what you are providing them now, and what you can do to provide better service.
- With your unit, identify ways to measure the quality and responsiveness of the service you are providing (e.g., number of errors detected in shipments each week; average time from order to delivery).
- Create a graph of each key service measure over time, and post the graphs where everyone in your work unit can see them.
Identify and implement improvements in work processes that will result in better customer service.

OBTAINING FEEDBACK

Periodically meet with your key customers to review the service you have been providing and identify ways to improve it.

Periodically survey your customers to learn how satisfied they are with your unit's service. Create a survey that includes both quantifiable ratings and open-ended questions.

Identify what work processes or assignments are currently hindering your unit's ability to provide excellent service to its customers. Develop ideas for changing the work processes or assignments and discuss them with your manager.

If your job involves providing direct service to external customers, consider taking a course that provides role plays and feedback on customer interactions.

LEARNING FROM EXPERTS

Interview individuals with a reputation for providing excellent service to their customers. Find out what these individuals did and how they improved their service to their customers.

COACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR MANAGERS

If you are coaching someone who is trying to develop this competency, you can:

- Provide feedback and suggestions to help improve customer service.
- Demonstrate through your own actions a commitment to providing excellent service.
- Ask this person what you can do to enable him/her to do a better job of focusing on customer service.
- Observe this person in interactions with key internal or external customers and provide specific, constructive feedback.
- Recognize and reward behavior that demonstrates a commitment to customers.

SAMPLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- By February 15, I will meet with each of my unit's 5 key internal customers. I will ask how satisfied they are with the service we are providing and what we can do to improve it.
- By March 8, I will meet with Lila Welch to learn what her unit has done to provide excellent service to its internal customers. From this conversation, I will develop a list of specific ideas to consider for application in my unit.
- By April 30, I will complete a self-study course in customer orientation skills and identify a list of ideas to apply in my own unit.
BOOKS


E-LEARNING COURSES


EXTERNAL COURSES


Empowering Your Front Line - How To Manage Customer Relations. Lauderbaugh & Associates. Tel. 800 500-9656. [www.jlaunderbaugh.com/Programs/prog_summaries.html#empower](http://www.jlaunderbaugh.com/Programs/prog_summaries.html#empower)


EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Directories and Providers of training and development programs and service