

# QUALITY SERVICE

## OVERVIEW

The opportunity to create unique competitive advantages and improve performance through professional customer service is probably greater today than it has ever been. The converse is also true – business is lost as a direct result of not addressing customer service issues.

Customers are not unique to one organisation. They take their business many places and constantly make comparative judgements about standards of customer service.

Organisations soon learn to their cost if they do not compare favourably in this process.

Today it is accepted that there is a set of attitudes, ideas and skills possessed by people who we might call “superior service givers”. Moreover, these can be taught to people to enable them to deliver quality service and to satisfy their clients and customers.

The Quality Service program is designed to share these attitudes and skills.

## AIMS

The aim of the “Quality Service” program is to achieve business development and (where relevant) improved profitability through the creation of competitive advantage and positive differentiation based on providing quality customer service.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of the program participants will :

1. Be able to identify their customers and understand the central role of the customer in the organisation’s survival.
2. Understand the customer’s needs, both real and apparent, and their basic motivations.
3. Know the features which distinguish “superior quality-givers” and understand how these features can be used by everyone.

4. Know the key communication skills used in dealing with customers and understand how to use them effectively.
5. Know why customers are difficult or angry, understand how this anger is expressed and know how to manage it effectively.
6. Have developed improved confidence in providing quality customer service leading to an enhanced image of the organisation.

## PROGRAM CONTENT

The program is generally structured around the following elements :

- a. The role of the individual in making the difference between good and bad service; the critical importance of matching technical skills and competencies with skills in handling people.
- b. Understanding what it is that customers really want and why they do the things they do. Basic needs that motivate customers in general and the techniques that enable you to determine which needs are most important in a given situation.
- c. What is it that “quality service-givers” do: how do they think and feel? The distinct qualities and characteristics of “superior service-givers” and how these can be used as a tool to identify areas where personal improvement is possible.
- d. Communicating with customers: the use of the key communication skills of listening, talking, writing and reading.
- e. The use of courtesy, not as part of a routine or mechanical formula, but as a basic, essential part of quality service-giving reflecting a real feeling for the customer.
- f. The importance of making every service transaction a winner. Every transaction is a little different and staff must learn to approach each one confidently, maintaining consistently superior performance regardless of the situation.

- g. When things don't go the way a customer thinks they should, they get angry. Knowing how this happens, and recognising the ways in which this anger is expressed, is important for the service-giver.
- h. Handling complaints and angry customers is a logical step from g. above. Staff must recognise that complaints are useful and understand when encountering anger and hostility, avoiding getting "hooked" into hostile and non-productive behaviour themselves.
- i. Much service giving involves the telephone and while all of the material outlined above is relevant when dealing with customers by telephone, use of the telephone also presents a number of unique challenges. It is essential that quality service-givers recognise this and use appropriate telephone skills.

The program uses a blend of classroom sessions, interactive group work and experiential learning activities including role plays. Video feedback strategies are used.

Participants will be expected to undertake some pre-program preparation.

## **EVALUATION**

The aspects of the program that are best regarded as "performance indicators" are outlined generally

under the heading "Learning Outcomes" above. Actually measuring these desired outcomes is less easy.

Participants themselves are always invited to provide their responses at the conclusion of the program which provides an indication of participant "comfort level".

However, over time the only real determinant of program success is the extent to which the program may be seen to have impacted upon participant performance. Our approach is to provide the participant, or a nominated manager or supervisor, with an evaluation instrument for completion several weeks (or even months) after conclusion of the program. This is essentially an in-house tool for use by the client.

However, we encourage organisations to return a copy of the instrument for use in the future review, development and general improvement of the program.

## **DURATION**

The basic program is designed to cover one full eight hour day, although variations of the program have been conducted over one, two and three days.