



The **COLORS** of Customer Service

Excellent customer service begins with the
customer service professional!

The **COLORS** of Customer Service

Book Excerpt

Introduction

Bringing Customer Service Full Circle

Customer service is critical to every business – whether it’s a hotel, an airline, a hospital, a construction company, a bank or a restaurant. Businesses need customers, so, businesses need customer service.

With this in mind, why isn’t customer service more of a priority? And, to put it bluntly, why is customer service often so lousy?

When my dog needs to be groomed, I drive all the way to the other side of town and I pass a handful of groomers along the way. I’m sure he could get a decent cut at any of these places. The price will also be roughly the same. What makes me take the extra time and use the extra gas can be explained in one word: service.

My dog, Marty, hates to be groomed. In fact, we’ve been uninvited from several groomers, but not at Dog’s Day Out. They welcome him with open arms. They take a little extra time with him. They know us by name. They make both of us feel valued. So I don’t mind getting up early on a Saturday morning and driving across town. To me, it’s worth it.

On the other hand, there are several businesses that have lost me for good. They were rude, inconsiderate, lazy and treated me like I didn’t matter. They couldn’t be bothered with serving me. Well, I made it easy for them. I won’t come back so they won’t have to be bothered.

And I’m not alone. Statistics say, out of 20 people that receive poor service, only one will complain. The rest just won’t come back. The good news is that if you can solve the complainer’s problem quickly, you won’t lose his business. But look at all the business that is lost in the process. Look at all the business that just walked out of the door in silent frustration.

The savvy manager or business owner will see the problem and have the sense to correct it. Many will recommend customer service training. But as a trainer who has trained many a customer service representative, I can tell you that the standard customer service training lacks a realistic perspective.

When it comes to the company hierarchy, customer service representatives are often on the low end of the organizational chart. They are often some of the lowest paid and least appreciated people in the business.

When they come to a training class, some are eager and others are weary. They get out of the office for the day. They listen, they discuss, they play a few games and then they go back to work. Nothing has changed. The training didn’t impact them. *It didn’t address their needs.*

While it's great, and even essential, to talk about the importance of customer service for the customer, it isn't enough. We sum it up like this: *you can't give service with a smile while wearing a frown!*

The customer is important but the customer service representative is equally important. If you want a happy customer, it stands to reason that you need to have a happy customer service representative.

Yet, most customer service training ignores the representative, instead zeroing in exclusively on the needs of the customer without ever addressing the needs of the representative.

Platitudes and mirrors and pretty posters can only go so far. Motivation works for a minute, but what is needed is a major paradigm shift.

Giving great customer service has just as many benefits for the customer service rep as it has for the customer.

When I started training from that perspective, I immediately noticed that the representatives in my classes perked up. Addressing the barriers that kept them from giving great customer service hit on an untapped vein of gold. When representatives give good customer service their days go by faster and smoother.

... their levels of stress and frustration are dramatically reduced.

... their jobs are more enjoyable.

... good customer service representatives are less apt to quit.

But how do you get to great customer service? It starts by acknowledging the obstacles and issues that the representatives face: boredom, engagement, taking issues personally, dealing with their own frustration, getting organized, and stress. Handling these issues paves the way for great customer service.

What Do Chameleons Have to Do with It?

The Colors of Customer Service takes place in a world run by chameleons. These aren't your average chameleons though. These chameleons don't change color to blend in with their surroundings; they change color to reflect their mood. You know exactly how each chameleon is feeling at all times. Are they a frustrated red or a friendly pink? Are they an apathetic yellow or a professional green?

Peter is starting as a new customer service manager at KarmaCo. His story is one that customer service representatives and managers can relate to. His team has attended all of the major customer service seminars and the workshops. Like most of us, they want to do a great job, but obstacles stand in their way, often obstacles that they haven't even recognized.

As a leader, it's Peter's job to show them another way. It's his responsibility to get them to see how giving great customer service can benefit them. He has to show them that great customer service doesn't just lead to happier customers; it can make *them* happier as well. It can improve their moods, their outlooks, and their relationships with co-workers.

As representatives, those on Peter's team have to be open and willing to try something different. After all, the definition of insanity is to do the same thing over and over again while expecting a different result.

While humans cannot change colors, it is usually easy to read our moods, in person or on the phone.

Luckily, many of the hurdles the customer service representatives face can be overcome with awareness and a little bit of effort.

Peter and his team go through a rainbow of colorful emotions but by the end they are poised to receive their own pots of gold.

For Animal Aficionados:

Chameleons are usually native to Africa, Spain, Portugal and Southern Asia and change color to blend in with their surroundings. The chameleons featured in this story are indigenous to North America, Europe, Japan and Australia and they change their color based on mood, thus their scientific name *Chamaeleo Moodringus*.

Oh, and by the way, no chameleons were harmed in the writing of this book.

Peter

First Day on the Job

As he sat in traffic, Peter was ready. He couldn't wait to get to work, as he straightened his tie and checked himself in the visor mirror. He was as excited as a kid on the first day of school; in fact, this was his first day. Peter had accepted a supervisor position at KarmaCo and he'd be managing six customer service representatives.

Meanwhile, his manager Chuck paced back and forth in the lobby, eager to get started. It was clear that he was just as excited as Peter, but for other reasons. Team C had been one of the more challenging teams in the company. Their customer service ratings were always among the lowest and even though Chuck had sent them to customer service training, nothing seemed to help. The big shots had taken a look at the numbers and they were concerned. Chuck was at his wits' end and he was ready to do just about anything.

"Hope you are ready for Day One," Chuck said as his new supervisor walked through the door.

"Sure am!" Peter responded with maybe a little too much enthusiasm.

He toned it down and continued, "I mean, I'm definitely ready."

"Good," Chuck said. "Let's get some coffee and get you started. I've set up a meeting to officially introduce you to the team."

Peter was curious. Chuck hadn't given him a lot of information about them but he'd been in customer service for a while so he knew what to expect. Or so he thought.

When they walked into the conference room, Peter couldn't believe his eyes. Every one of his representatives was red, blue or yellow! Every single one! Now, it's understandable if you don't understand why this was so shocking. So here's the explanation. You see, these particular chameleons (*Chamaeleo Moodringus*) changed color based on their mood. Red was anger and frustration. Blue was overwhelmed and stressed. Yellow was bored and apathetic. There wasn't a happy one in the bunch. There were no friendly pinks, professional greens (like Peter) or confident purples — just reds, blues and yellows. Yikes! Peter would definitely have his work cut out for him.

Chuck stepped forward and began to address the group. As Peter watched them, he noticed the frowns, the smirks, the subtle eye rolls and the defensively crossed arms.

"As you know," Chuck began, "we should be doing everything in our power to make sure the customer is satisfied. Yet, this team consistently has some of the lowest customer satisfaction ratings in the company. I don't know what else to do. You have all been through customer service training. You've got mirrors hung in your cubicles to help you remember to smile. We even have those expensive motivational posters all over the walls. What else can I do?"

Team C was silent. There were no suggestions or ideas, just a tension-filled silence.

Chuck shrugged and turned to Peter who stepped forward apprehensively. He still had a little of the enthusiasm he'd had in the car.

Peter introduced himself. No response. He said he was glad to be there. Silence. Clearly, Peter's enthusiasm was not spreading. So, eager to end this awkward meeting, he announced the first part of his plan.

"I'm going to spend some time over the next few weeks meeting with each one of you," Peter smiled. No one else did.

Fred, a deep red, shifted defensively in his seat. Bonnie, a canary yellow, sighed and continued to doodle in her notebook. Darla, a deep and beautiful blue, rolled her eyes. As he turned to leave, Peter wondered exactly what he'd gotten himself into.

The **COLORS** of Customer Service

Facilitator Guide

Colors of Customer Service Facilitator Guide

The Colors of Customer Service is designed to be a lively and interactive training that covers both what customers want and what customer service professionals need to create a positive and productive experience.

Audience

- This training is designed for customer service professionals, call center staff and anyone who routinely comes into contact with clients or customers.
- The training is designed for groups of 8 – 30 people.
- Small group exercises are designed for 3 and 6 participants.

Time

- 6 hours of material
- 1 hour for lunch
- Two 10-minute breaks (morning and afternoon)
- 7 hours in total

Supplies

- Projector and screen (for PowerPoint)
 - Flipchart or white board
 - Additional flipcharts for small group exercises
As many as six flipcharts could be needed (six groups of five people)
 - Markers
 - Stopwatch or timer to track 60-seconds ○ Optional
 - Copies of the Signature exercise for each participant
 - Team Scenario cards printed on cardstock
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Colors of Customer Service Facilitator Guide

Training Schedule Breakdown

Introduction	30
What is Customer Service / Why It Matters	10
ABCs of Customer Service	20
Customer Service Quiz	20
Quiz	10
Answers	10
Colors of Customer Service	10
Synopsis	5
Colors of Customers	5
Bonnie	60
Overview	5
Communication	15
Communication Exercise	15
Break	10
Effective Listening	10
Bored At Work	10
Conclusion	5
Connor	35
Overview	10
Tech Talk	5
Buzz Words	20
Conclusion	5
Lunch	60
Darla	35
Overview	5
Organization	20
Hold Technique	5
Conclusion	5
Gwen	60
Overview	5
Transfer Technique	5
Characteristics of Good Teammates	15
Dealing with Difficult Employees/Team Scenarios	30
Conclusion	5
Break	10
Fred	40
Overview	5
Problem with Anger	5
What the Irate Customer Wants	10
B.L.A.S.T	15
Conclusion	5
Todd	40
Overview	5
Managing Change	15
Uniformity	5
Change Exercise	15
Conclusion of Course	10

Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Define what customer service is
- Describe the traits of a successful customer service professional
- Determine how to ...
 - Get and stay engaged
 - Handle frustration
 - Deliver excellent internal customer service
 - Use organization to improve the working environment

Review these so participants know what to expect.

Colors of Customer Service Facilitator Guide

Introduction (10 minutes)

What is Customer Service?



Customer service is a series of actions provided to customers before, during and after purchasing and using goods and services by a business or organization. It is designed to enhance the level of satisfaction the customer feels regarding their interaction with the organization.

Customer service affects every interaction: sales, help lines, service and repair departments, etc. Anyone who interacts with a customer has a part in delivering excellent customer service.

The customer service professional (CSP) uses their tools, resources and knowledge of company processes and procedures, to meet the customer's needs —leaving them with a positive feeling and wanting to continue conducting business with their organization.

While customer service can be measured objectively through surveys and call response time, there is a strong emotional component on both sides of the equation. A successful CSP creates a positive emotion within the customer.

Of course, it is very difficult to create a positive emotional experience for the customer if the customer service professional isn't having a positive emotional experience themselves.

If a Customer Service Professional wants to create positive experience for the customer, they must start by creating a positive experience for themselves.

True customer service comes full circle! It begins with the professional and extends to the customer.



Why Service Matters

When products and prices are similar, it is often the quality of service that makes the difference. Good customer service creates loyalty which means repeat business and repeat business boosts the bottom line.



Did You Know...?

9 out of 10 customers say they would pay more to ensure a superior customer experience (Harris Interactive/Right Now poll, 2010)

Colors of Customer Service Facilitator Guide

When service is poor, most customers won't complain, they just won't come back. The typical business only hears from 4% of its dissatisfied customers. The rest quietly leave and take their business with them (Understanding Customers by Ruby Newell-Legner).



The explosion of social media has made customer service even more relevant. In the past, customers shared a positive customer experience with three to five people and a poor experience with 12 – 15 people. In the world of social media those numbers are infinitely multiplied. With Facebook and Twitter, it is easy for a consumer to communicate their delight or dissatisfaction to hundreds, if not thousands, of people. Review sites like Yelp, Trip Advisor, Apartment Ratings and others exist solely to

catalog customer experiences. Since the average potential consumer conducts online research before purchasing a product or service, good reviews of products and services are essential.



Did You Know...?

24% of American adults have posted a comment or review about a product or service.

(Pew Research Center, 2010)

The ABC's of Customer Service (20 minutes)

Customer Service includes both the expectations of the customers and the traits of the customer service representative. When a customer service professional knows a customer's expectations and exhibits the qualities of a professional customer service professional, the stage is set for excellent customer service!

Colors of Customer Service Facilitator Guide

	<i>The customer expects...</i>	<i>The Customer Service Professional should be ...</i>
C	<u>Courtesy</u> – Polite and professional, never mean, surly or rude	<u>Communicative</u> – Communication is clear with a minimum of jargon
U	<u>Understanding</u> – They understand the question, concern or problem	<u>Uniform</u> – Responses are consistent and customers don't get different responses from different professionals
S	<u>Smarts</u> – They are knowledgeable with the information and ability to solve problems	<u>Systematic</u> – They know the procedures and processes and conduct them as quickly and accurately as possible
T	<u>Time Sensitivity</u> – Customers want solutions and service that is respectful of their time	<u>Team member</u> – They are as reliable, courteous and helpful to co-workers as they are to customers
O	<u>Ownership</u> – Customers don't care who created the problem, they just want it solved	<u>Organized</u> – They are able to find relevant information quickly
M	<u>Maturity</u> – Even when the customer isn't showing maturity, they expect it from the service professional	<u>Motivated</u> – They have a desire to be helpful and create a positive experience for the customer
E	<u>Empathy</u> – Customers expect a certain level of sensitivity to their concerns	<u>Engaged</u> – Listening attentively, seeking to understand the customer and acknowledging their overall experience is necessary.
R	<u>Results</u> - They want their problems solved as completely as possible	<u>Reliable</u> – The customer should be sure they have received the right information and any follow-through will be performed

The **COLORS** of
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Participant Guide

Introduction

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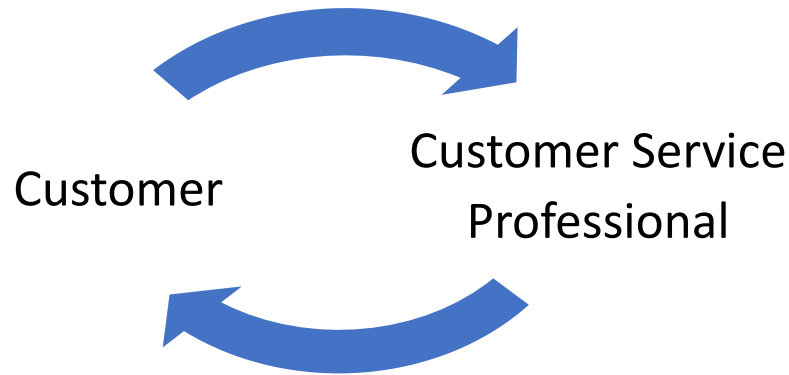
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T	_____ - Customers want solutions and service that is respectful of their time	_____ - They are as reliable, courteous and helpful to co-workers as they are to customers
O	_____ - Customers don't care who created the problem, they just want it solved	_____ - They are able to find relevant information quickly
M	_____ - Even when the customer isn't showing maturity, they expect it from the service professional	_____ - They have a desire to be helpful and create a positive experience for the customer
E	_____ - Customers expect a certain level of sensitivity to their concerns	_____ - Listening attentively, seeking to understand the customer and acknowledging their overall experience is necessary.
R	_____ - They want their problems solved as completely as possible	_____ - The customer should be sure they have received the right information and any follow-through will be performed