

## Taking the 'Cus' out of Customer Service

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### Your Instructor

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- 36 + years experience in local government
  - City Manager, County Administrator, Assistant Town Manager, **Assistant City Manager**
- 19 + years in Public Works (all as Director of Public Works in the City of Fredericksburg)
- Graduate of West Virginia University
- Graduate of the Senior Executive Institute at UVA



# Customer Service

## What is customer service?

- The provision of a service or product or performance of a task for someone who has a reasonable expectation that it will get done.



## What is “excellent” customer service?

- Accomplishing this in a prompt, professional and friendly manner.



# Customer Service

## Who are your customers?

- The resident or businessperson making a request for service or registering a complaint.
- The employees whose work you supervise.
- Your boss.
- The members of the City/Town Council or Board of Supervisors.



# Customer Service

## What are the keys to providing excellent customer service?

- A genuine interest in being of service.
- A belief that the customer has the right to expect the requested service from you.
- Taking ownership of the request for service (as opposed to simply passing it to someone else) until the matter has been concluded.
- A willingness to enlist the help of others in providing the service.



# Customer Service

## The most important customer service person in your organization is more often than not:

- The City or Town Manager/County Administrator.
- The person who eventually resolves the matter.
- The person who takes the first phone call or responds to the initial email message containing the complaint or request for service.



# Customer Service

## Why?



- Because that person sets the tone for all future interactions the customer has with your organization.
- I care about your issue (or I don't).
- I want to help you with the issue (or I don't).



# Customer Service

## Why?

(continued)

- It's important to me that you are satisfied (or it isn't.)
- It's important to me that your concern was handled properly (or I **REALLY** don't care).



# Customer Service

**Tips from a Customer Service professional:**

- **SMILE** – People can sense a smile, even if they are on the other end of a phone line.
- **LISTEN** – Give the customer adequate time to express the concern or request for service before starting to respond.



# Customer Service

**Tips from a Customer Service professional:**

(continued)

- **DELAY** – Hold your response to an angry customer until you have provided a reasonable amount of time for the customer to “vent”.
- **DEPERSONALIZE** – Don’t take offense even if the customer accuses you (or “you people”) of causing a problem or not caring about helping. (Q-TIP – Quit Taking It Personally)



# Customer Service

## Tips from a Customer Service professional: (continued)

- **EXPRESS OWNERSHIP OF THE ISSUE** – If you must refer the customer to someone else in your organization, say, “If that person isn’t able to help you, don’t hesitate to contact me again and I’ll make another effort to help you.”
- **OBTAIN ALL NECESSARY INFO ABOUT THE ISSUE** – Customer name, address, phone number, location of the issue, date and time of the incident, when is the best time to call back, etc.



# Customer Service

## Tips from a Customer Service professional: (continued)

- **UNDERPROMISE AND OVERPERFORM** – Don’t guarantee success, but assure the customer you will do your best. Then, do all within your power to resolve the matter to the customer’s satisfaction.
- **EXPLAIN** – If you absolutely cannot resolve the matter to the customer’s satisfaction, explain the reason(s).



# Customer Service

## Bonus Tips

- **May I help you? vs. Can I help you? (Is “How may I help/assist you?” even better?)**
- **Avoid lingo.**
- **Do not assume.**
- **Do not multi-task during the conversation.**
- **Empathize with customer.**
- **Use reflective listening (repeat back what you understand customer has told you.)**



# Customer Service

## Which of the below responses to a customer are consistent with excellent customer service?



- “I’m not the person who can help you, but I’ll transfer you to that person” (and then stay on the line until the other person answers).
- “Please provide your name and contact information and I’ll ask the appropriate member of our staff to contact you promptly.”



## Customer Service

**Which of the below responses to a customer are consistent with excellent customer service?** (continued)



- “The person with whom you need to speak isn’t here. May I transfer you to his/her voice mail?”
- “The person with whom you need to speak isn’t here. Please call back tomorrow.”
- (To an agitated caller) – “You need to calm down.”



## Customer Service

**“. . . and NOW for something completely different . . .”**

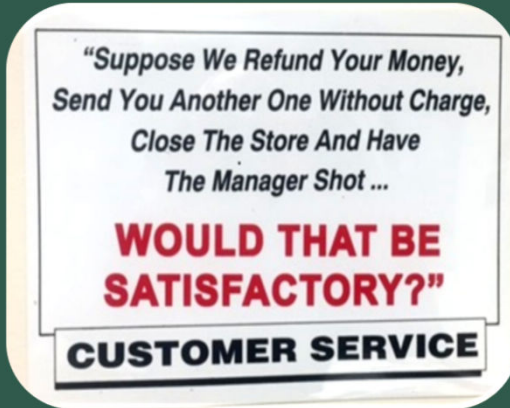
**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcliR8kAbzc>**





# Customer Service

**“. . . OR you can post a sign. . .)**



# Customer Service

**When all else fails, just apply this motto:**



**“WE’RE NOT HAPPY . . .**



**. . . UNTIL YOU’RE NOT HAPPY.”**



# Customer Service



- **Attitude** – I want to resolve this issue!
- **Take ownership of the issue.**
- **LISTEN.**
- **Enlist the help of others.**
- **Celebrate that you have provided excellent customer service!**



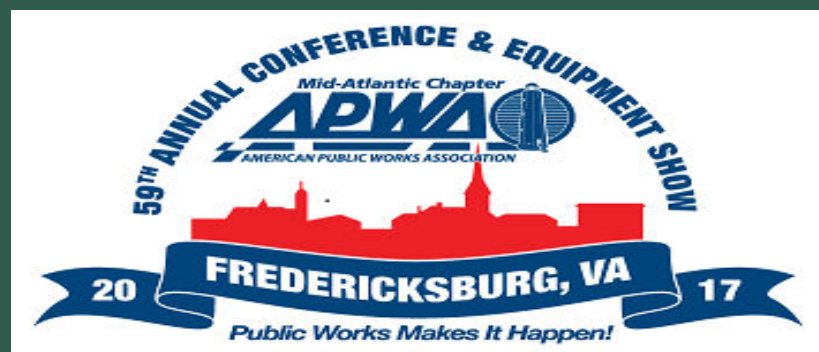
# QUESTIONS?



## AND, FINALLY . . .

*Please complete the session evaluation form and return it to the envelope/box.*

*( . . . and please also remember that I worked **REALLY** hard today to provide you **EXCELLENT** customer service)*



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