

SERVICE PLUSTM g3

A RMG Training Company White Paper

Building a Service Quality Culture:
Proven Strategies that Work

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Exceptional customer service is facilitated in an environment in which coaching and mentoring are an integral part of the corporate culture – and not simply a one-time training event. An effective way to achieve exceptional service quality is through a system in which managers continuously coach and mentor employees day after day, week after week. This type of culture can be accomplished throughout the organization only when an organization develops solid teams of both service-quality coaches.

In this white paper, we will overview the coaching culture of a SERVICE PLUS organization, touching on some of the key characteristics of their successful approaches.

The Place for Service-Quality Training: On the Job.

In the past, ShoreBank in Illinois employee satisfaction surveys revealed that many employees were leaving due to a poor relationship with their managers. The institution realized that it could not reduce turnover and increase job satisfaction until it created a “consistent and positive” relationship between managers and employees. As a result, the bank committed itself to the development of a continuous service-quality coaching and mentoring culture with the SERVICE PLUS system.

Building a supportive coaching culture is a sensible business strategy to produce consistent service victories – victories that retain and expand customer relationships.

The bank’s vice president and manager of employee development, noted that, “Managers need some specific strategies to be successful and the organization needs a process to hold everyone accountable.”

He added, “Employees function best when expectations are clear and when managers take enough interest to pay attention to how employees are performing.” Service-quality training at the bank is not a one-shot classroom event. Instead, it is made up of combinations of blended-learning activities that are spaced over time. The majority of the training is done on the job, with managers serving as personal trainers or coaches to their employees. The SERVICE PLUS training is also supported with helpful on-the-job communication, timely encouragement, reinforcement and performance improvement discussions with the coach. The solid coaching role managers now engage in at the bank helps them develop stronger working relationships with their employees.”

Coaches are positive role models for the very same service-quality skills they ask employees to perform.

Here are some of the distinguishing characteristics of ShoreBank's approach to service quality excellence:

- All new bank employees are immediately linked to a SERVICE PLUS coach and mentor. The coach is a manager or supervisor with whom they work. By using clear procedures and processes, these coaches demonstrate competence in service-related skills and immediately hold employees to a higher standard.
- When hired, all new employees complete SERVICE PLUS service-quality training. Coaches provide support to employees during this training. The training is not a one-time workshop. Instead, it is a spaced-learning “experience” that includes individual self-study, personalized one-on-one practice with the coach, and frequent on-the-job feedback from the coach regarding the use of these skills with customers.

- SERVICE PLUS Coaches are positive role models for the very same service-quality skills they ask employees to perform. Employees learn by emulating how their coaches treat customers!
- SERVICE PLUS Coaches provide performance feedback to employees to reinforce their achievements and support continued improvement. Coaching is built into the fiber of being a successful leader – it is something that is done day-in and day-out, year-in and year-out!
- Besides the appreciation they receive at their offices, employees are also recognized bank wide for service-quality proficiency. For example, employee success stories are published in organization newsletters. Employees are acknowledged when they deliver great service during mystery shops. Employees have also received special cash awards each month for referral accomplishments. In short, lots of creativity and variety is used to celebrate individual and team service accomplishment whenever it occurs.

A bank customer took the time to write this note about the memorable service she received:

- “You have made an unhappy and disappointed new customer a customer who is now loyal and who sings your praises. I have found you to be very conscientious in your approach to our numerous and unique situations. You have over and over again, approached our various problems in a professional and ethical manner. Job well done! Again, thank you and I look forward to our continued working relationship.”

A letter like this represents an observable service victory. Customer satisfaction successes are common occurrences now because of the bank's dedication to build and maintain a vibrant coaching culture with their SERVICE PLUS system in place. The more service victories, the better your organization will be at retaining and expanding customer relationships.

Building a supportive coaching culture is a sensible business strategy to produce consistent service victories that retain and expand customer relationships! But remember, successful coaching is a never-ending process. The leaders at your organization, from executives to new supervisors, should be engaged as coaches to continually help others fine-tune their skills. Another important role that coaches play is to provide opportune feedback to employees to recognize and celebrate their accomplishments. To build a strong coaching culture foundation, first focus on service quality. Then, develop higher-level coaching skills with the attention on sales. In order to achieve service quality victories consistently, coach day-in and day-out! A vibrant coaching culture is a way of life, not a special event.