

We Are Customers to Each Other

By Nancy Friedman, The Telephone Doctor

At this special time of year, when we're all so busy, stressed out and short of time, it can be so easy to forget some of our most important customers. That would be our co-workers. So in the spirit of the holidays, I dedicate this column to the inside customers. The internal ones, the folks we live and lunch with each day. The ones that can tend to be family and get unconditional support.

Here are 6 steps to help you be sure you're paying attention to the 'lost customer,' the internal one - the person you work with every day. Keep these by your desk and learn them step-by-step. You'll be glad you did.

1. **Know the Mission of Your Organization and YOUR Role.** Those of us who are in a small department of a large company often times miss the big picture. If you don't know the mission of your organization - ask for it. Keep it at your desk. It'll help you with that big picture. You'll start to understand the "why" of many things you're asked to do and don't know why. Your role is important no matter what you do. Someone is depending on you and what you're working on for the company. You just may not be aware that you're needed.
2. **Internal Service is Everyone's Responsibility.** This is aimed to management. Internal customer service isn't just for the worker bees. It's for everyone. If management isn't doing their part, often times the entire customer service program can go out the window. No double standards. Internal customer service is for EVERYONE. As we say "it starts at the top."
3. **Respect Employee Differences.** Cub Fan? Sox Fan? Republican? Democrat? Rock Music? Classical? Whatever. Just because you don't agree with someone doesn't make you right. Differences are crucial for an organization. Differences are key to understanding people. If everyone thought the same way, most of us wouldn't be needed. Don't argue just because a co-worker isn't doing it the way you do; or thinking the way you do. Learn to respect others for what they do. That's why we have chocolate and vanilla ice cream.
4. **Recognize the Personal Space of Others.** Simply put, this boils down to the 'golden rule.' Those who can work with a radio playing music may disturb others around them who aren't able to concentrate. Loud voices around someone who's on the phone with an external customer can be annoying also. If you're in a cubicle or a sharing area, recognize there are others around you. Be sensitive to their wishes too.
5. **Work to Resolve Conflicts.** Who hasn't had 'words' with another employee? Perhaps they weren't kind words. Or maybe you and a co-worker strongly disagree on a project or idea. Not trying to make it work can only lead to more stress and frustration. Work it out. Even if you need to call in a mediator or another co-worker or someone not involved who can keep an open mind. I doubt that you'll need a professional negotiator, but someone from HR or another trusted employee can usually be of help with conflict resolution.
6. **Show Appreciation.** I saved this for last so you'll remember it. Being appreciated and showing you care with a genuine "Thank You." It can be a note, phone call or just stopping by an office and telling someone they did a great job; that you enjoy working with them. This makes a huge difference in internal relationships. There are surveys upon surveys that show how much a genuine pat on the back of appreciation is thought of as a welcomed non-monetary reward.

Internal customer service is critically important to everyone - including your external customers. So many companies pay big time attention to customer service for their customers and yet, the internal folks get lost in the shuffle sometimes.

Stop today - NOW - and turn to someone in your office and tell them you enjoy working with them. It'll start the year right!

Reprinted with permission of Telephone Doctor Customer Service Training, St. Louis, MO. Nancy Friedman is a featured speaker at association and corporate meetings. She has appeared on OPRAH, The Today Show, CNN, FOX News, Good Morning America, and CBS This Morning, as well as hundreds of other radio, TV and print outlets. For more information, log on to the Telephone Doctor® website at www.telephonedoctor.com or call 314 291 1012.

