

Feelings

Quality Service...

First Time, Every Time

-Leader Guide

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Introduction

“Quality Service...First Time, Every Time” is a structured approach to teaching excellent customer service skills to every employee in your organization. Materials consist of the participant book, support materials, three videotapes and a leader guide.

“Quality Service...First time, Every Time” will have a strong, powerful impact on customer service when it has the support and committed participation of you and your fellow workers. This leader guide was designed to provide the tools you need to generate that support.

“Quality Service...First Time, Every Time” has two main objectives:

- 1) To improve and increase customer sensitivity by concentrating on customer service, the key to continued business success in any field.
- 2) Increase the self-worth, pride, and professionalism of every person within the company through mastery and daily practice of this philosophy.

The Program Organization

To achieve these objectives on and off the job, the training should be conducted in a systematic, organized manner. Employees find that their relationship with the group leader will be improved by the frank, open approach to customer service that is embodied in this concept. They will appreciate the interest and enthusiasm you bring to the discussions, and they will translate your interest and enthusiasm into personal terms. By giving the tangible evidence of your personal interest in helping your co-workers improve themselves, you are showing that you care about their individual, as well as their professional development.

It is recommended that all employees be invited to take this course. For best results, schedule the three group sessions not more than one week apart. Plan to take at least two hours for each group session to give participants the discussion time they will want and need to explore the concepts of the program. There is enough substance in each group session to give everyone plenty of stimulation for constructive group discussions. The more everyone participates in the discussions, the better they will understand and the better they will be able to apply the concepts.

Preparing for Your Sessions

Conduct all three sessions in a comfortable, well ventilated area. Make sure the sessions aren't interrupted, so that participants won't be distracted. Provide participants with pencils and paper and make sure the room is not too crowded. A comfortable group will be receptive to the program's message.

Allow yourself adequate space to conduct the group sessions. If you do not know all the participants, make a list of everyone's first name. You may also want to provide name tags. During the sessions, it is very important to address each participant by name to help establish a warm and friendly environment.

Locate and test the videotape equipment that will be used for the sessions. Avoid equipment that has poor audio and video quality. Technical problems will detract from the presentation.

Make certain that each participant has a personal copy of the participant book. They will be referring to it frequently during the sessions, so be sure to read the appropriate sections and exercises before each session.

Ensure that you can be well heard. Speak clearly and distinctly without straining your voice. Do not allow participants to gravitate toward the back of the meeting room.

As much as possible, try to hold each session in the same location. Again, the idea is to establish a familiar, comfortable environment.

Finally, take advantage of the draft letter included in this leader guide. Personalize and use it with the participants. They will appreciate the written confirmation of their involvement.

Here is a checklist to follow in planning an effective implementation:

- 1) Announce the sessions in written form for a specific time and place. Be sure to start and stop on time.
- 2) Select a meeting room where people can be comfortable and not be interrupted.

- 3) Check the meeting room, as well as the videotape equipment prior to each session. You may wish to use a blackboard or easel as part of your role as a group leader.
- 4) Make certain to read the relevant sections and appropriate exercises in the participant book prior to the sessions.

The Art of Good Leadership

Because you will be conducting the group sessions, a few words about group leadership may be in order, especially for those of you who do not conduct training on a regular basis.

As training progresses, involvement is not a problem. People will want to participate. However, until that natural comfort level is reached, it is important for the group leader to make sure that everyone participates. This leader guide contains sample questions. These questions ensure that the group discussions will have the desired impact.

The questions will also help you establish and adhere to the agenda for each of the sessions. You need to keep the sessions on track because each segment is important!

Do not be tempted to take shortcuts or eliminate portions of the sessions. Use all of the material.

At the same time, the questions do not have to be repeated word-for-word. The important role of the leader is to guide the group's discussion towards the principles of "Quality Service...First Time, Every Time." The most comfortable way to do that varies with each group and with each leader. As long as the principles are covered fully, feel free to occasionally depart from the text.

Do not worry about objections, complaints, or disagreements. It is far more important for you to maintain an open, sharing atmosphere in each session, than to achieve 100 percent agreement. Allow the group to comment and answer objections. By doing so, you will achieve the objectives of this program.

Finally, keep the sessions moving. Do not drag them out. By achieving a comfortable, efficient pace, you will keep participants alert and active. Good leadership requires you to stay on your toes and a step ahead of the participants.

How to Run the Meetings

First, look for ways to personalize the messages which are represented in the “Quality Service...First Time, Every Time” concept. Use questions relating to problems and situations with which the participants in your group are familiar.

Even the best leaders will encounter problems from time to time; however, any problem can be turned into an advantage and most importantly, an opportunity to improve the training.

For instance, what should you do about a participant who strays from the main topic? Instead of urging him or her to “get back on track”, which can produce resentment, ask the participant a specific question about the topic being discussed. For example: “George, several minutes ago, Jeanne mentioned that she doesn’t always know how to deal with customers who complain about back orders. What opportunities does Jeanne have to use positive communication in those situations?”

How do you deal with participants who start to argue? As we mentioned, you want a frank and open exchange of views and 100 percent agreement is not necessary. But you do want to avoid heated shouting matches. To defuse any such confrontations, physically put yourself between the debaters so they cannot see each other. Then involve the entire group in the discussion by rephrasing the topic of the argument. Ask the group for its opinion.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, you may have participants who hold back or will not participate. Try calling on these people by name. Don’t push too hard, but try to get them to talk about their experiences and feelings that relate to the topics being discussed.

General Leadership Techniques

From the outset, make certain your group sees you as a coach or facilitator to help them explore topics in this program, instead of as an expert in quality customer service. At the beginning of each session, emphasize that each member of the group is encouraged to share good and bad personal customer service experiences. Suggest that each session be used to find answers to questions that truly concern them.

It is important to build a team atmosphere. Like any team, you and the participants will be more successful implementing the principles of “Quality Service...First Time, Every Time” by working as a group rather than as individuals.

Leadership Options

As we discussed, one of the most important things you can do as a group leader is to establish the right atmosphere for the group sessions. Ideally, participants should have fun and feel good about participating. Here are some suggestions to help create and sustain a positive learning atmosphere:

- 1) At the start of Session One, ask each participant to introduce himself or herself. Ask each person to share a recent job accomplishment, best feature of his or her job, and something special about themselves.
- 2) In any of the sessions, but particularly in the second and third sessions, it is appropriate to ask participants to share successes. For this system to work, people must feel good about themselves. To do so, we need to spend some time in the sessions focusing on positive events. Have each person share something positive he or she accomplished in the week prior to the training.
- 3) At the start of the second session, have participants find three people in the room that they do not usually talk to, and give those three people a compliment.
- 4) Have participants list areas of the company they would like to know more about.
- 5) Break up into groups and have participants candidly discuss the barriers to communicating in a positive manner which they find most troublesome.

These are only a few suggestions. The “Quality Service...First Time, Every Time” concept is flexible; however, it does require that everyone participates. As a leader, you will get acquainted with the participants. Think of activities that will motivate them and generate enthusiasm. Do not worry about doing something a little silly. After all, this should be fun, and a good laugh is a great ice-breaker!

The Art of Seminar Questioning

In conducting these group sessions, use open-ended questions. “Quality Service...First Time, Every Time” is not effectively presented by lecture or directive. Ask questions and let the participants do the “lecturing” with their answers. In this approach, the leader acts as an interviewer by asking probing questions. The best learning takes place when the participants’ feelings, and not just their intellect, are involved. As a leader, you should aim for a “gut level” learning experience. There are three steps to achieving that goal:

- 1) Always ask open-ended questions; that is, questions that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. The questions in this leader guide are good examples.
- 2) Ask open-ended questions to the group in general, to a specific person in the group, or to a team within the group.
- 3) Use certain key words, particularly in group questions. For example, ask the group to:
 - a) Tell why something is important.
 - b) Analyze a situation.
 - c) Give his or her own story to illustrate a point.
 - d) Solve a problem.
 - e) Explain how they feel.

Remember, when in doubt or if there is no response or an inappropriate response, CONTINUE TO ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS.

How a Leader Handles Questions

The best way to handle questions from the group is to answer with another question. Remember, the objective is to get group participants to interact and to learn from each other through discussion. Here is how to do it:

- 1) Return the question back to the questioner by rewording it and asking for specifics. For example: “Bill, you asked why plastic communication has such a negative effect on customers? Let me ask you if you can share an example of a plastic comment you received over the past several weeks that really turned you off?” Or: “Sharon, you asked why remembering a customer’s name is so important? Let me ask you how you feel when people you deal with use your name?”
- 2) Pass the question to another participant. For example: “John has asked how to deal with customer complaints without giving out negative communication. Sally, you have been a representative for quite a while. Can you tell us how you handled that kind of situation?”

The Participant Book - A Key Element of the Program

The participant book is designed to explore in much greater detail the points covered in the videotapes and in the group sessions and is an important part of the program. In many cases, participants will respond far better to the written word than they will to either the videotapes or the group sessions.

As a leader, you must emphasize the importance of the participant book to your group members. Certainly, there is no way that you can force them to read the chapters or to complete the exercises. At the same time, there are many ways in which you can encourage them to do so.

- First, read the participant book yourself to thoroughly understand the content. It is an invaluable resource in customer service.
- In your group sessions, make sure each participant has his or her own copy of the participant book. Encourage them to write their name on page one and complete all of the exercises included in the book.
- Assign Chapters One through Six of the participant book at the conclusion of Session One. Assign Chapter Review Questionnaires to each participant. Ask them to complete and hand these questionnaires to you at the start of Session Two.
- Take time to review your participants' grasp of the first six chapters at the start of Session Two. Encourage discussion of the questions.
- Assign Chapters Seven through Twelve of the participant book at the conclusion of Session Two. Assign the Chapter Review Questionnaire Chapters Seven through Twelve, to each participant. Again, ask them to complete and hand in these questionnaires to you at the start of Session Three.
- Review and discuss the Chapter Review Questionnaire at the beginning of Session Three to demonstrate an understanding of the concepts.
- Assign Chapters Two, Six, Eleven, and the Follow-Up Review Questionnaire one week before the thirty to sixty day Follow-Up Session is scheduled.

- Review and discuss the Follow-Up Review Questionnaire during the Follow-Up Session. Create additional interest and momentum for using these customer service skills each day.
- Encourage the personal growth of participants by completing the exercises at the end of each chapter in the participant book.

Note: The printed questions in the leader guide, which have the heading: “Transcript - Exercise Number...” are an exact reprint of the questions which are found in the participant book. These questions are reprinted in the leader guide for the convenience of the group leader. They will aid in conducting group discussion with program participants during the group sessions.

Sample Letter, Memorandum or Notice about the Program

Note: You are encouraged to reproduce a version of this notice on your company stationery. Personalize it as much as possible. While hand-delivering this notice to each potential participant, say to them. "I personally want you to participate in "Quality Service...First Time, Every Time." You are a valuable member of our team. I think the concept is great! I will look forward to seeing you there!"

MEMORANDUM

TO: (Potential Participant's Name Goes Here)
 FROM: (Your Names Goes Here)
 DATE: (Use Today's Date)
 RE: "Quality Service...First Time, Every Time"

This is my personal invitation to you to join us for a series of three meetings on the basic points of providing good customer service.

All of us need to explore the concepts of quality customer service and keep refreshing ourselves on how to be effective at it. I have familiarized myself with the program and I immediately thought it was a program that all of us would find helpful and enjoyable.

The basic concepts of "Quality Service...First Time, Every Time" which we will be discussing during the sessions can surely help us in our daily contact with customers and fellow workers. There has never been a time when positive, effective customer service has been in greater demand!

We will hold our first group session on _____ (day),
 _____ (date), at _____ (time) a.m. (or
 p.m.). Please confirm your availability for this time as soon as possible. If you have a conflict, perhaps we can choose a more convenient time so you can participate in "Quality Service...First Time, Every Time."

I am looking forward to learning more with you about achieving successful customer service.

Sincerely,
 (Your signature)

Note: While this sample letter or memorandum strongly urges participation, it is important to encourage employees to voluntarily participate. Do not make potential participants defensive about how they handle customers and co-workers.

The Outline of the Sessions

What you will accomplish in conducting the program:

Session One

- Identify why customers decide to buy products and/or services from our company.
- Use pre-recorded dramatizations to illustrate the significance of quality service.
- Use pre-recorded dramatizations to analyze performance with customers and co-workers.
- Understand how attitudes are telegraphed to customers and co-workers.
- Conduct a participants' inventory of present quality service attitudes and practices.
- Develop familiarity with positive and negative communication in their relationships with customers.
- Examine our daily need for positive feedback.

Session Two

- Test participants' grasp of positive and negative communication and how to spot them.
- Gain an understanding of other forms of communication: zero, crooked, plastic, and hostile communication.
- Identify the consequences of these types of communication in dealing with customers.
- Learn why a positive self-image is essential in providing quality customer service.
- Practice how to make customers feel important.
- Learn the "how to" approach to provide quality service to customers.
- Identify vital telephone techniques and how to master the art of listening to your customers and co-workers.
- Learn how to ask good questions.

Session Three

- Develop familiarity with the “how-to’s” of performing for customers.
- Review ways of learning for the benefit of others.
- Know when to make promises.
- Know how to handle special problems.
- Avoid the dangers of “too much knowledge.”
- Overcome the barriers to providing quality service.
- Learn the “ways” of practicing the principles, and understand what this knowledge will also do for you.
- Deal successfully with “problem” or complaining customers.
- Learn techniques for switching an angry customer into a satisfied one.
- Understand the importance of service recovery and how to be empowered.

Follow-Up Session

We recommend that the initial three sessions be followed up within thirty to sixty days after completion of the third session. The focus of the Follow-Up Session should be the materials discussed in Chapters Two, Six and Eleven of the participant book, plus the review questions in the participant book.

We also recommend that, with using the “Quality Service...First Time, Every Time” concept, your company designs its own Follow-Up Session so all employees hired after the initial presentation will benefit from the program. The Follow-Up Session must be adapted to the particular needs of your company, but you will find that the session provided makes an excellent introductory and orientation tool for all new employees.

Session One

The Subject of Session One:

Understanding Why People Do What They Do

Objectives:

The objectives of Session One are to:

- Kick off the quality service excellence concept with participants.
- Introduce the participant book and distribute copies to participants.
- Identify why people feel the way they do about a particular company.
- Use videotaped dramatizations to illustrate the significance of quality service.
- Develop an understanding of how attitudes are perceived by customers, coworkers, and families.
- Define exactly who is a customer and begin using the terminology of external customers and internal customers.
- Conduct an inventory of participants' attitudes toward customer service.
- Develop familiarity with positive and negative communication in participants' relationships with customers.
- Examine our daily need for positive feedback.
- Give assignments for the next meeting.

Time of the Session:

Session One is designed to last two to three hours, but may be extended by the facilitator.

What You Will Need:

- Videotape player, television set or monitor and the Session One videotape.
- Chalkboard or easel with large notepad, chalk, or marking pens, pencils, and paper for participants.
- Identifiers (name tags, seating chart with first names, or table markers) for each participant.
- Group Discussion leader guide.
- Participant books.
- Optional Warm Fuzzy for each participant.

As Leader, You Need To:

- Read the first six chapters of the participant book.
- Preview the Session One videotape.
- Review the leader guide material for Session One.

Leader Guide Text

Note: The information in the boxes must be conveyed to the participants. You may read it or you may convey the information in your own words. Additional instructions to you are printed outside the boxes.

In welcoming the participants to this program, you may want to tell a bit about yourself and your job responsibilities. Whichever way you proceed as the group leader, please remember that the objective is to generate discussion among the participants.

Welcome to Session One of “Quality Service...First Time, Every Time.” For everyone one here who doesn’t know me, my name is _____. I will be the group leader during our training sessions and will provide the structure for our discussions. From these discussions, we will be learning from each other. Now that you know who I am, please introduce yourself by telling us your name, job function and what you would like to gain from this experience.

(Allow participants to introduce themselves.)

The title of this program has a strong meaning behind it. Today, many organizations provide “customer service.” They fill the needs of customers by doing what they say they will do. In order to set this company apart from our competitors, we want to exceed our customers’ expectations by providing quality service.

What is the difference between “customer service” and “quality service?”

(Title two columns on a flip chart: “Customer Service” and “Quality Service.” Request responses from participants and compare the two.)

For example:

Customer Service

Answering the phone by the second ring

Making a promise

Helping someone who asks for help

Quality Service

Answering the phone by the second ring—with enthusiasm

Following through on a promise

Offering assistance before someone asks for help

Think about the number of interactions where you have the opportunity to exceed the needs of your customers each day. Assuming that each customer can only have one interaction per visit or call, let's calculate how many people you may have an opportunity to interact with on a positive or negative basis

(Follow this process and do the calculations on the flip chart.)

How many customers do you interact with on an average day?

Number

In a five-day work week, that is:

$\times 5 = \text{Total}$

In four weeks, that comes to:

$\times 4 = \text{Total}$

The purpose of the calculations is to help you begin to see the scope of the opportunities you have every day. If you pay attention to each interaction, you can have a powerful effect on whether these interactions are positive, neutral, or negative.

During these sessions, we will discuss how each of you can improve the quality of service you provide to others and how this commitment will affect your personal life as well as your professional career.

For the next several seconds, I would like for you to think about something you have done in your work or personal life that gave you satisfaction. Think about some accomplishment that really stands out in your mind that you especially enjoyed. Okay, now close your eyes and think about it.

(Please wait five or ten seconds until you start seeing some smiles.)

That felt pretty good, didn't it? That warm feeling is what "Quality Service...First Time, Every Time" is all about: feeling good more often, and just as important, making others feel good too.

There is more to "Quality Service...First Time, Every Time" than making people smile. (State your company name) has decided to use this quality service training system for a simple reason: to improve the quality of service that we deliver to our customers. This organization's success depends on the success of everyone in this room. So it stands to reason that anything that helps us will help the company. Everyone benefits.

This business depends on our use of good customer service skills. The feelings that customers have about (state your company name) and about the people who serve them directly impacts company profits. It is important for us to give the level of service we want to receive when we are the customers. (Write this statement on the flip chart....Give the level of service you want to receive)

Every business needs customers to survive and grow. So, let's take a few minutes to discuss our customers. What does the word "customer" mean?

(Participants will likely say it means a person who spends money to buy something.)

Who are our customers? Describe them.

(Our “customers” are varied. Virtually any person or business with whom our company comes in contact, including our vendors, are customers.

If participants have not yet identified fellow employees as customers, ask them who else is a customer.)

I think we have established that being a customer covers a lot of ground and that the word has a broad definition. How about sharing some customer experiences with the group?

(Ask a couple of people to share good experiences they had as customers. Then ask a couple of people to share some of their bad experiences as customers.

Distribute copies of the participant book as you speak.)

Analyzing experiences such as these is the basis of this program. Much of what you are going to hear in these sessions will not be new to you.

The concept is based on some simple behaviors. The problem is that most of us know these behaviors, but statistics and surveys show that we often forget to put them into daily practice. With your participation and commitment to use what you learn here, we will expand our customer service knowledge which will improve our behavior, skills, and attitudes toward customers, co-workers, vendors, family, and friends.