

FEELINGS



Leader Guide

**FEELINGS
CUSTOMER CARE
for
Supermarkets**

LEADER GUIDE

FEELINGS Customer Care

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

The World's Premier Customer Service System

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Printed in the United States of America
0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Table of Contents

Introduction	v
Preparing for Your Sessions	vi
The Art of Good Leadership	vii
How to Run the Meetings	viii
General Leadership Techniques	ix
Leadership Options	ix
The Art of Seminar Questioning	x
How a Leader Handles Questions	xi
The FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE Participant Book	xi
Sample Letter about the FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE System	xiii
The Outline of the Sessions	xiv
Implementation Suggestions	xvi
Customer Service Performance Standards	xxi
Session One Leader Guide	1
Session Two Leader Guide	31
Certificate of Accomplishment (sample)	59
Session Three Leader Guide	61
Follow-up Session Discussion Guide	85

Introduction

FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE is a system built around making people feel better about their work and personal life. It is a structured approach to improving customer service through increasing sensitivity and personal communication skills. Materials for **CUSTOMER CARE** consist of the **CUSTOMER CARE** participant book, three videos, and this group discussion guide.

CUSTOMER CARE will have a powerful impact on the level of customer service your associates provide, if it has the support and committed participation of you and your co-workers. This group discussion guide is designed to provide the tools you need to generate that support.

FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE was designed to achieve two main objectives:

- 1) Increase the store's profitability by concentrating on customer service, the key to continued business success in the supermarket industry; and
- 2) Increase the self-worth and self-image of every person within your company, through mastery and daily practice of the **CUSTOMER CARE** philosophy.

The Program Organization

To achieve these objectives on and off the job, **FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE** sessions should be conducted in a systematic, organized way. At the same time, the sessions should be relaxed and informal, so everyone will feel comfortable. Although associates may lead the sessions, **CUSTOMER CARE** training is often led by an immediate supervisor. Everyone attending the sessions will find that their learning will be enhanced by the frank, open approach to caring communication which is embodied in the **CUSTOMER CARE** system. Participants will appreciate the interest and enthusiasm the group leader brings to the discussions, and translate that interest and enthusiasm into very personal terms. By giving the tangible evidence of your personal interest in helping co-workers improve themselves, you'll be showing that you really care about them as individuals and care about everyone learning to deliver caring, superior customer service.

Because **FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE** training will help everyone in the company, we recommend everyone be invited to participate. For best results, schedule the three **CUSTOMER CARE** group sessions no more than one week apart. Plan to take at least two hours for each group session to give participants the discussion time they'll want and need to explore **CUSTOMER CARE**. There is enough substance in each group session to give everyone plenty of stimulation for constructive group discussion. The more everyone participates in the discussions, the better everyone will understand, remember, and apply **CUSTOMER CARE**.

Preparing for the Sessions

Conduct all three **FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE** sessions in a comfortable well-ventilated room or environment. Make sure the sessions are free from interruptions so you and the participants won't be distracted. Provide participants with pencils and paper, and make sure the room is large enough to allow the participants to stretch out a bit. A comfortable group will be far more receptive to the **CUSTOMER CARE** message.

Allow yourself plenty of room for the things you'll need to conduct the **CUSTOMER CARE** group sessions. If you don't know all of the participants on a first-name basis, make a list of participants. You may want to provide name tags. During the sessions, it's very important to address the participants by name to establish a warm and friendly environment.

Locate and test the DVD equipment that you'll be using for the sessions. Avoid equipment with inferior loudspeakers or poor images. Technical flaws like these will detract from your presentation.

Make certain that each participant has his or her own personal copy of the **CUSTOMER CARE** participant book. You and the participants will be referring to it frequently during the sessions, so be sure to read the appropriate sections and exercises before each session.

As the group leader, you need to be sure everyone can hear you. Speak clearly and distinctly without straining your voice. Don't allow participants to gravitate toward the back of the meeting room.

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

Finally, take advantage of the **CUSTOMER CARE** draft letter included in this leader guide. Personalize it to suit you. Participants will appreciate the written confirmation of their involvement. Ideally, you should structure groups which have a broad cross-section of jobs: line employees, part-timers, supervisors, office people, support services associates, and even managers. The frank exchange of ideas and solutions benefits the entire business, as well as educating everyone in what "the other guy" does.

Here's a checklist to follow in planning the effective implementation of **CUSTOMER CARE**:

- Announce the sessions in written form for a specific time and place. Be sure to start and stop on time.
- Select a meeting room where people can be comfortable and not be interrupted.
- Check the meeting room and the DVD equipment prior to each session. You may wish to use a chalkboard or easel as part of your role as group leader.
- Read the relevant sections of the **CUSTOMER CARE** leader guide and participant book prior to each session, including the appropriate exercises.

The Art of Good Leadership

Since you will be conducting the **FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE** group sessions, a few words about group leadership may be in order, especially for those of you who don't do this type of thing on a regular basis.

As **CUSTOMER CARE** progresses, gaining involvement is usually not a problem. People want to participate. But, until that natural comfort level is reached, it's important for the group leader to go out of their way to ensure that everyone participates. This leader guide contains sample questions, virtually a "script," for the group leader. These questions for group leaders are in large type surrounded by boxes to make them easy to spot. The questions guarantee that the group discussions have maximum impact. Additional instructions for you are printed outside the boxes.

The scripted questions also help you establish and adhere to an agenda for each **CUSTOMER CARE** session. You should not allow the sessions to get off track. As a structured, programmed approach to quality, caring customer service, each portion of each session is important.

If you add material or encourage lengthy group discussions, be prepared to add one half hour or more to each session.

Don't be tempted to take shortcuts or eliminate portions of sessions. Use all of the materials for **CUSTOMER CARE** that have been provided.

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

If you want to depart from the "script," don't just ad-lib. Think about the questions you want to ask, and speak simply and precisely. Remember, you'll be communicating feelings as well as information. Relax and let your personality come through.

When leading the discussions, don't bury your nose in the leader guide. Look people in the eye and scan the room while talking. The same applies to listening. When the discussions take off, you'll need to follow along and guide the conversation in the right direction. You can't do that without interested listening. It also helps to keep an open mind. Everyone is entitled to an opinion. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. The honest exchange of viewpoints is what's "right."

Some group leaders feel comfortable standing behind a podium and conducting the session. However, this places a barrier between you and the participants. If you wear reading glasses, use them and carry the leader guide as you move close to the participants and interact with them. This will permit an easy flowing dialogue that everyone will enjoy.

Don't worry about objections, complaints or disagreements. It's far more important for you to maintain an open, sharing atmosphere in each session than it is to achieve one hundred percent agreement. Allow the group to comment on and answer objections. By doing so, you'll achieve the objectives of **CUSTOMER CARE**.

Finally, keep the sessions moving. Don't drag them out. By achieving a comfortable, efficient pace, you'll 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 internalize the messages presented in **FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE**. Use questions relating to problems and situations familiar to the people in your group. Job situations are probably easiest, but don't neglect examples away from the job. The principles of **CUSTOMER CARE** have universal application.

Please keep in mind that the learning process, particularly in a meeting, is very fragile. Don't allow one person to dominate a session. This kind of domination threatens others, particularly subordinates or less-experienced people.

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

For example, what should you do about a participant who strays from the main topic? Instead of urging him or her to "get back on the track," which produces resentment and rarely works, ask the participant a specific question on the topic being discussed such as; "George, several minutes ago Jeanne mentioned that she doesn't always know how to deal with customers when things get hectic. What opportunities does Jeanne have to use caring communication in those situations?"

How about participants who start arguing? As we've pointed out, as the group leader, you want a frank and open exchange of views. One hundred percent agreement isn't necessary. But you certainly want to avoid shouting matches. To defuse such situations, physically stand between the debaters so they can't see each other. Then, involve the entire group in the discussion, by rephrasing what was being argued. Ask those in the group for their opinions.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, you may have participants who hold back, or won't participate. Try asking questions of these people by name. Don't push too hard, but get them to talk about their own experiences and feelings which relate to the **CUSTOMER CARE** topics being discussed.

General Leadership Techniques

From the outset, make certain the group doesn't see you as an expert in excellent customer care techniques, but as a coach to help the entire group explore these topics. At the beginning of each meeting, emphasize that each member of the group is free to share good and bad personal experiences with customers. Suggest that they use the sessions to look for answers to the questions that truly concern them.

It's important to build a team atmosphere. Like any team, you and the participants will be more successful implementing the principles of **CUSTOMER CARE** by working as a group, rather than as individuals.

Leadership Options

As we've discussed, one of the most important things that a group leader can do to make **FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE** work is to establish the right atmosphere for the group sessions. Ideally, participants should have fun, and feel good about participating. Here are some suggestions for things you can do to create and sustain that atmosphere:

- At the start of Session One divide the group into pairs. Ask the people paired to interview each other and then have each person briefly introduce the other person to the group.
- In any of the sessions, but particularly in the second and third sessions, it is appropriate to ask participants to share successes. For **CUSTOMER CARE** to work, people must feel good about themselves. To do so, you need to spend some time in the sessions focusing on positive events. Have each person share something positive that he or she accomplished during the last week.
- At the start of the second session, have participants find three people in the room who they usually don't talk to, and have them give those three people a compliment.
- Have participants list areas of their job or the company that they'd like to know more about.
- Break up into groups and have participants candidly discuss the barriers to caring communication that they find most troublesome.

These are only a few suggestions. The **CUSTOMER CARE** system is flexible, but it does require participation from everyone. As a group leader, you know (or will come to know) your participants. Think of things to motivate them and get them enthusiastic. Don't worry about doing something a little silly; after all, this should be an enjoyable experience. A good laugh is a real icebreaker.

The Art of Seminar Questioning

In conducting these group sessions, try to use open-ended questions that relate to experiences your group may have encountered. **FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE** is not effectively presented by lecture or directive. Ask questions, and let the participants do the "lecturing" with their answers. The group leader really acts as an interviewer by asking probing questions.

There are three steps to achieving this goal:

1. Always ask "open-ended" questions; that is, questions which can't be answered by a simple yes or no. The questions contained in this leader guide are examples of such questions.
2. Ask open-ended questions to the group in general, any specific person in the group, or to a "team" of persons within the group.
3. Use certain key words, particularly in group questions. For example, ask the group to:
 - ⇒ tell why something is important
 - ⇒ analyze a situation
 - ⇒ give his or her own story to illustrate a point
 - ⇒ solve a problem
 - ⇒ explain how they feel

Remember, when in doubt, or if there is no response, or an inappropriate response, **KEEP ASKING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS.**

How a Leader Handles Questions

The best way to handle questions from the group is to answer a question with another question. Remember, the objective is to get group participants to interact and to learn from each other through that interaction. The best facilitator avoids answering questions. The goal is to promote group interaction.

- Return the question back to the questioner by rewording it and asking for specifics. For example: “Bill you asked why saying “Have a nice day,” seemed to have such a negative effect on customers. Let me ask you -- can you share with us an example of when someone said that to you over the past several weeks and it 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.”
- Pass the question to another participant. For example: “John has asked how to deal with customer complaints without being negative. Sally, it seems I saw you doing that just the other day. Can you tell us how you handled that situation?”
- When a participant gives a response that is out of line or in conflict with the **CUSTOMER CARE** strategy, don’t argue or disagree yourself. Ask another participant who you know would probably have a different approach for their ideas. For example: “Mike, do you agree with Mary’s approach?” or “Kathy, could you give us your opinion on what we should do when we face situations like Frank just mentioned?”

The FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE Participant Book — The Key Element of the Program

The **CUSTOMER CARE** participant book is designed to explore in much greater detail the points covered in the videos and the group sessions. It 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 videos or the group sessions.

As a group leader, you must emphasize the importance of the **CUSTOMER CARE** book to the 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 you can encourage them:

- First, read the **FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE** participant book yourself to thoroughly understand the content. It's an invaluable resource when learning the techniques of quality customer service. It is also filled with ideas to propel the discussions.
- In the group sessions, make sure each participant has his or her own copy of the **CUSTOMER CARE** participant book, write their name on page one, and complete all the exercises included in the book.
- Assign Chapters One through Six of the **CUSTOMER CARE** participant book at the conclusion of Session One. Assign the Chapter Review Questionnaire at the end of Chapter Six to each participant. Ask them to complete the review questionnaire and hand them in to you at the start of Session Two.
- The **CUSTOMER CARE** participant book includes exercises at the end of each of the twelve chapters. At the beginning of Session Two, take time to discuss some of the exercises included at the end of each of the first six chapters.
- Assign Chapters Seven through Twelve of the participant book at the conclusion of Session Two. Assign the second Chapter Review Questionnaire at the end of Chapter Twelve to each participant. Again, ask them to complete and hand it in to you at the start of Session Three.
- Review and discuss the second Chapter Review Questionnaire at the beginning of Session Three. Once again, take time to discuss some of the exercises included at the end of each of the last six chapters.
- 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 the **CUSTOMER CARE** quality service skills each day.

Sample Letter, Memorandum or Notice About CUSTOMER CARE

(Note: We encourage you to reproduce a version of this notice on your company letterhead. Personalize it as much as possible. If possible, you may choose to hand-deliver this notice to each potential participant and while giving him or her the notice say, “I want you to seriously consider participating in FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE. You’re a valuable member of our team. I think the concept is great! I’ll look forward to seeing you there!”)

Memorandum

TO: (Participant’s Name Goes Here)
FROM: (Your Name Goes Here)
DATE: (Use today’s Date)
RE: **FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE**
Customer Service Training

This is my personal invitation to you to join us for a series of three meetings on the **FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE** customer service training program.

All of us, in one way or another, are important to the success and satisfaction of our customers. The way we treat our customers creates lasting impressions with them. We 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 felt immediately that it was a program that all of us would find helpful and enjoyable.

The basic concepts of **CUSTOMER CARE** that we’ll be discussing during the sessions can help us in our daily contact with customers and co-workers, as well as with our families and friends. There has never been a time when caring, effective communications has been in greater demand! Join us to explore the role you fulfill in this important process.

We’ll hold our first **FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE** group meeting at _____(place) 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 take part in **CUSTOMER CARE**.

I am looking forward to exploring this dynamic quality service and personal growth concept with you.

Sincerely,

(Your signature)

Outline of the Sessions

What you'll accomplish in conducting the **FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE** program:

Session One:

- Identify why customers and associates decide to patronize or work at a given company.
- Use pre-recorded dramatizations to illustrate the significance of good service and feeling good about yourself.
- Use pre-recorded dramatizations to analyze performance with customers, co-workers and families to build your self-confidence and appearance.
- Understand how attitudes and personal self-worth are telegraphed to customers, co-workers and families.
- Conduct participants' inventory of present customer attitudes and practices.
- Develop familiarity with caring and uncaring communication in customer relationships.
- Examine our daily need for caring communication to improve our self-worth and customer service skills.

Session Two:

- Review participants' grasp of caring and uncaring communication and how to recognize it when used with customers and co-workers.
- Gain understanding of the forms of uncaring communication -- zero, crooked, plastic and hostile.
- Identify the consequences of these types of communication in dealing with customers and co-workers.
- The mastery of self-care as a requirement of good customer service and building your self-esteem.
- Practice in making customers and co-workers feel important.
- The "how-to" approach to spoken communication with customers.

- Vital telephone techniques and voice mail tips.
- Mastering the art of listening to your customers.
- How to ask good questions.

Session Three:

- Develop familiarity with how to perform for customers.
- Review ways of learning for the benefits of others and your own self-confidence.
- Knowing when to make promises.
- Knowing how to handle special problems.
- Avoiding the dangers of “too much knowledge.”
- Overcoming the self-esteem barriers to providing quality service.
- Knowing the “ways” of practicing the **CUSTOMER CARE** principles of feeling good about yourself.
- Dealing successfully with “problem” or complaining customers, co-workers and families.
- Techniques for switching an angry customer into a satisfied one.
- Putting **CUSTOMER CARE** to work for you.

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 any company using the **FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE** concept design its own Follow-up Session, so all employees hired after the initial **CUSTOMER CARE** presentation can benefit from it. The Follow-up Session must be adapted to the particular needs of the company, but you’ll find that **CUSTOMER CARE** makes an excellent introductory and orientation tool for all employees.

Implementation Suggestions

Audience Size

5-10 participants - ideal for new group leaders

8-15 participants - the optimum size

16-30 participants - fine, but require experienced group leaders

Implementation: Three Sessions

The above audience sizes are for three separate sessions. Experience has shown that the structured repetition and dialogue among participants works most effectively in three sessions.

Alternative Implementation: One Session

From time to time, particularly in sessions where new employees are trained, either the size of the group or time restraints may require conducting all three **CUSTOMER CARE** sessions in a single, running session. Groups typically need at least five hours for a single combined session. Remember, three separate sessions are recommended because the spaced repetition allows the participants to better internalize the learning.

If you decide to conduct **CUSTOMER CARE** in a one-day session, it is a good idea to distribute the participant books seven to ten days in advance and request that the staff read the twelve chapters as a pre-class assignment. You may want to recommend they also complete the Chapter Review Questionnaires.

Alternative Implementation: Six Sessions

Because of time constraints, it is possible to schedule **CUSTOMER CARE** training over six shortened sessions. Although this is not the best situation, **CUSTOMER CARE** can be split into six sessions as follows:

Existing Session One: Split after completing Exercise Six in Section E in the leaders guide.

Existing Session Two: Split after completing Exercise Twelve in Section B in the leaders guide.

Existing Session Three: Split after completing Exercise Twenty in Section C in the leaders guide.

This results in six sessions, each lasting between forty-five minutes and one hour.

Seating Suggestions

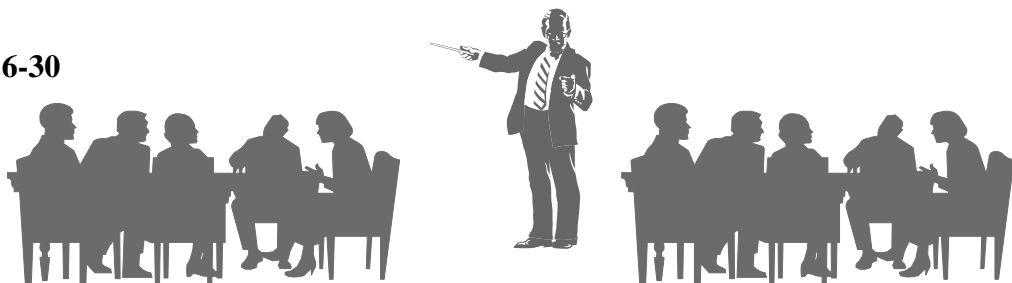
**Audience of 3-7
participants**



**Audience of 8-15
participants**



**Audience of 16-30
participants**



Rules for Role Play

Play it Straight

Encourage the role players to talk to each other as if in actual conversation. They should not make comments to the observers or describe what they would say. They should just say it.

No Interruptions

The observers and other team members should remain silent during an actual session.

Right to Stop

No one is forced to continue in a role-play situation. A player can simply stop at any time. The session leader can also stop a role-play (for example, if it is going off track, or is complete). No one else has the right to call a halt. This is to prevent premature critique sessions before the players have a chance to accomplish their objective.

Right to Conference

However, any role player or team member (i.e. anyone except an observer) may call for a conference. The purpose of a conference is to help the role player (or team) accomplish the objective.

Self-evaluation First

It is absolutely essential that the role players have the first opportunity to comment on their own performance. It is much more effective and desirable to acknowledge our own flaws than to hear about them from others.

Good News First

Every critique, even of oneself, should begin with what went well and proceed to “suggestions for improvement.” In your role as facilitator, be sure there is always some good news and encouragement in every critique.

Quality Service Performance Profile for Front-line Employees

FEELINGS CUSTOMER CARE provides the attitude and skill training necessary for improved job performance. The Quality Service Performance Profile allows supervisors and managers to evaluate front-line employees' quality service skills, attitudes, and performance. The company and associate benefit when job performance and quality service skills are evaluated on a regular and consistent basis.

Target Audience

Front-line Associates: All associates who have an impact or influence on quality service. Contact with customers by telephone or in person is preferred but not necessary.

Scoring and Rating

The scoring and rating schedule is designed to give an approximate sense of an employee's patterns of attitude and performance in four selected areas:

- 1) Attitude and commitment (10 questions)
- 2) Personal traits (5 questions)
- 3) Interpersonal skills (10 questions)
- 4) Work performance and job knowledge (10 questions)

For each question, evaluators choose one of three statements, numbered one, two, or three. These numbers correspond to the three-point scoring and rating schedule in which 3 = excellent, 2 = average, and 1 = poor. It is important to note that some of the thirty-five questions may be inappropriate for certain employees who rarely have contact with customers. Evaluators should answer only those questions which best reflect an employee's typical day-to-day duties and responsibilities.

The Performance Profile includes a place in each of the four sections for computing the average score for that section as well as a place at the end for computing the overall performance average. Many good and excellent employees may score an occasional "1" on certain questions. These isolated indications of poor attitude or performance indicate areas for improvement. However, occasional poor scores are not as important as the total averages which indicate broader patterns of performance. Be selective with the employees you hire and retain. **CUSTOMER CARE** will have the greatest impact on the attitudes and behavior of productive employees.

Focus on Observable Behavior

The best performance reviews are carefully planned. That means taking the time throughout the year to observe, discuss and document the employee's performance. Accomplished reviewers focus on observable behavior. They discuss what they see and hear, and they give specific examples to support their observations. Examples help the employee understand exactly what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

The Quality Service Performance Profile is designed to provide managers and supervisors with an extended list of topics in the areas of attitude and commitment, personal traits, interpersonal skills, and work performance and job knowledge. The thirty-five questions which fall under these four areas provide the manager a convenient format for recording observations which then can be used in conjunction with quarterly or annual reviews. The detailed observations and comments provide the basis for the most important element of performance reviews which are manager and employee goal-setting.

It is important to remember that instruments such as this performance profile do not, in themselves, constitute a performance review. They provide a tool for recording observations and for aiding in the development of a specific employee development plan.

Suggested Performance Profile Evaluation

Score	Rating	Evaluation
1 - 51	Poor	Put on thirty-day probation. Requires frequent, close supervision and direction to achieve minimum job performance. Needs to go through the program again.
52 - 68	Below Standard	Marginal performance. Needs more customer service skill training and should go through the program again.
69 - 81	Standard	Performance expected of experienced associates. Consistently performs all aspects of the job. Meets customer service performance standards.
82 - 92	Excellent	Above average in delivering customer service. Consistently exceeds job requirements with superior quality and quantity. Could be good leader for future sessions.
93 - 105	Superior	Demonstrates exceptional customer service attitude, performance, and ability. Outstanding performance on a level not frequently achieved by others. Excellent leader for the program.

Approaching the review in a positive manner will be very beneficial. Don't just focus on the associate's weak areas; also give positive feedback about his/her strengths. Convey to the employee that he/she is a valuable person to the company.