

## Five Cs of Great Customer Service

### Commitment

Commitment is the first step in providing exceptional customer service. Commitment to customers is first a state of mind. All school employees must desire to serve customers well because they want to – not because they have to. If they can't be committed to customers, then they shouldn't be in the positions they are in. Commitment to customers must become a way of life. Nothing less can be accepted or tolerated, or the organization will not prosper. This stance is also essential to an individual's enjoyment of his or her job and his or her success within the organization.

### Competence

In order to serve customers well, school employees must be highly competent in a number of areas – but in two specifically. The first is knowledge of the organization. Without a complete mastery of all of the information related to the programs and services the school organization provides, school employees cannot be effective problem solvers. Without thorough knowledge from school employees, parents won't gain the confidence they need to make the decisions facing them about their children.

The second area in which all school employees need to be highly competent is the ability to work the systems responsible for delivering to parents and students precisely what they want and need. Aply handling the frontline communication with parents and students is only the first step. Following through, so all school customers are handled correctly and with the utmost efficiency, is where good customer service is made or broken. Certain employees may be great with customers but may fail to establish the internal relationships with their colleagues that make it possible to provide full customer satisfaction in a timely manner. Employees must be able to get the help they need to overcome the factors that get in the way when serving customers. If they don't, they will never be able to serve customers to the degree the organization wants and needs them to.

### Cheerfulness

This is essential. Cheerfulness stems from two other characteristics that school employees need if they are to provide great customer service – confidence and a can-do attitude. Cheerful people exude a certain level of confidence that in turn breeds confidence. Cheerful people don't have few challenges in life than others – they simply elect to meet those challenges with a sense of optimism rather than be consumed by the negative. Thus, when customers have concerns or problems, cheerful people face them with the attitude that says, "I'm sure we can do something about that" or "We have a solution that I know will work for you." In a world where people are used to experience endless problems, an organization that has an attitude full of solutions is a breath of fresh air.

### Creativity

The bottom line is that if a staff can employ its creativity to meet the exact needs of customers, customers will become more supportive and engaged and will find little reason to go elsewhere. In addition, the ideas of customers will lead the entire organization to innovations it can use across the organization. If staff members learn to take the information customers give them and translate it into new ideas and better ways of doing things, they will become stars for the organization.

## Caring

Above all else, customers want staff members to care about them. They don't want to be considered "one of many." Rather, they want to feel that they are unique, with special needs and concerns. Remember, all customers have egos that need nourishment.

Customers want to deal with people who care about their time, their problems, and their desires. They also want to deal with people who want to spend enough time with them to understand these things about them. Customers expect courtesy – that's a given. But when they receive true caring, demonstrated by people who are willing to go the extra mile, find a way to deliver – even when it's difficult – and show concern for them as individuals, customers become loyal for life.