

# CUSTOMER SERVICE

INSTRUCTOR

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## COURSE OUTLINE

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Gain an appreciation of how to treat customers and provide quality service in a timely manner.
2. Understand how quality customer service affects the bottom line of your business.
3. Identify how to communicate to customers effectively through various media and strategies.
4. Learn how the latest research and studies available have impacted our understanding of customer service

## ***Introduction***

*“A customer is the most important visitor on our premise. He is not dependent on us; We are dependent on him. He is not an interruption in our work; He is the purpose of it. He is not an outsider in our business; He is part of it. We are not doing him a favor by serving him; He is doing us a favor by giving us an opportunity to do so.”*

*- Kenneth B. Elliott, VP of Sales, The Studebaker Corporation ~1941*

Customers are the cornerstone of all business success. As such, customer service philosophies are the leading components in the mission and value statements of most successful organizations and facilities. They establish a corporate culture that encourages and celebrates exceptional customer service, and they keep the organization focused on the customer’s expectations as a prerequisite to the delivery of exceptional service. They mean what they say, and they deliver.

Prior to coming to VMS, take a moment to review your vision, mission & values statements and your customer service philosophy. Then, consider these excerpts from the statements of leading facilities:

*“Success starts with our people. Driven by an enduring commitment to our core values we will enrich the lives of our guests, clients and community by creating extraordinary experiences...”*

*— Hamilton Convention Centre*

*“To be an iconic international standard multipurpose indoor Arena that will place Dubai on the international touring circuit for world-class entertainment and indoor sports to enhance the lives of residents of the UAE and generate significant ongoing growth of inbound tourism to Dubai.*

*— Coca Cola Arena*

*“CenturyLink Field is a special place to work, and it takes a special type of person to join this team. We are all professionals dedicated to our culture of service and guided by our mission statement in all that we do.... We are a service organization. Each of our employees is dedicated to creating memorable experiences for our fans, guests, and clients.”*

*— CenturyLink Field*

*The Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts’ vision is to enrich the lives of everyone in our community through extraordinary and diverse performing arts experiences.*

*— Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts*

These statements speak truths about the service-centered mindset each organization maintains. To truly foster a customer-centric culture, the successful venue leader must ensure everyone understands the organization's service goals and is working to achieve them. Your mission statement serves to remind all employees of the commitment to service in support of the organization's overall vision. Posting it in full view of employees and customers will keep it top of mind to ensure they are always prepared to deliver.

## ***Research (Just the facts, ma'am...)***

*"The more advocates you have, the fewer ads you have to buy."*

- Dharmesh Shah, CTO, HubSpot

*"Happy customers are your biggest advocates and can become your most successful sales team."*

- Lisa Masiello, Founder & CMO, TECHmarc Labs

To truly understand why customer service is so important to an organization, we need to first understand some core metrics. Much of the research quoted in the customer service field was originally conducted in the 1970's by an organization called TARP (the Washington, DC-based Technical Assistance Research Program). Based on this, it is now the accepted standard that:

- Satisfied customers tell three to five people about their positive experience, while dissatisfied customers tell 10 or more people about their negative experience.
- At a management level, companies only hear from 4% of dissatisfied customers.
- One complaint = 24 unhappy people who did not call. 99% of these people will not come back, and each of these people will tell at least ten friends.
- 95% of customers who complain will return to your facility if you resolve their issue quickly; 54-70% will remain a customer if their issue is resolved.

TARP has since revisited this research numerous times and replicated it in almost every industry and in 20 countries. According to the TARP data, here is what customers of the 21st century are telling us:

- 68% of customer defections occur because of an attitude of indifference towards the customer by the staff.
- "Tip of the Iceberg Phenomenon"; that is, more than 50% of customers who encounter a problem do not complain; roughly 45% of customers will complain about a problem to a front line person; only 1-5% of customers will escalate their complaint to management or corporate office; having an easy method of communication to the corporate office will double the number of complaints received at this level.
- Complaint rates vary by the type of problem. Problems resulting in monetary losses have higher complaint rates than mis- treatment, quality, and incompetence.

- At least twice as many people are told about a bad experience than are told about a good experience. Word-of-mouth varies by product, price, and industry.
- Customers who complain and are satisfied with the response are up to 8% more loyal than if they had no problem at all.
- 20% of dissatisfaction is caused by employee actions, 40% by corporate products and processes that have an inherent surprise for the customer, and up to 40% are caused by customer mistakes or incorrect expectations.
- The ratio of cost to win a new customer versus retaining a current customer varies from 20:1 to 2:1.

These studies have also been replicated by countless other organizations including the Harvard Business Review and the Center for the Study of Social Policy, both referenced at the end of this Monograph. What does this research mean to craft a successful customer service program? Based on these details, it is highly likely that venue managers only hear about a very small percentage of the negative (and positive) experiences people are having with the venue. Therefore, the onus is on the manager to develop processes that encourage customer feedback at all levels of the organization. We'll address these later in the reading.

Research suggests that organizations *will* hear from people who feel they did not get their money's worth. With the ever rising prices of travel, registrations, and event ticket prices, customer expectations have increased accordingly. However, you likely *will not* hear from people who have concerns about minor inconveniences or how they are treated. You are going to have to encourage them to tell you, so you can be certain your customer service goals are being met.

It is essential to address customer comments and concerns as quickly as possible. Research clearly illustrates that customers who have issues resolved quickly become even more loyal than if they had never encountered any kind of problem at your facility. They become your brand ambassadors and supporters because you demonstrated your concern for their experience.

Lastly, when recognizing that it can cost up to 20 times more to find a new customer than it can to retain an existing one, we recognize that exceptional customer service becomes an investment and not an expense.

### ***Return on Investment (Customer service makes cents...)***

*"Good customer service costs less than bad customer service."*

*— Sally Gronow, Head of Customer Contact, Welsh Water*

Getting a customer into a facility for the first time may not be difficult—after all, our venues should host attractive events. Having customers return is not always as easy, particularly if there is competition for clients' dollars. By helping to retain good guests and repeat clients, customer service becomes an essential tool for enhancing your bottom line.

Marketing and promotion can go a long way towards inviting and encouraging customers to patronize a facility. However, if customers do not enjoy their experience on-site, they may not return. With the increasingly rapid pace of the home viewing experience and the increasing costs associated with live entertainment and sporting events, it is not enough to simply host an event anymore. You must provide a better experience than the couch at home. Some of the reasons customers will return include location, price, product, and the level of service they receive. One study by the management-consulting firm of Booz, Allen, and Hamilton, Inc. found poor service to be responsible for 40% of customer defections. By driving customer loyalty through exceptional service, you can significantly increase your sales and your profits.

Customer service can provide additional financial benefits by effectively reducing employee turnover. According to John Tschohl, the President of Minneapolis-based Service Quality International, employee turnover is inversely proportional to their perceptions of the quality of service provided by an employer. When a company's service is poor, customers do not like to patronize the business. This results in employees having to work harder to keep the business coming in. Sometimes the result is high employee turnover, which can be an expensive warning sign to employers that the company is not customer-focused.

### ***Ear to the Ground (Tell me more...)***

*"Until you understand your customers — deeply and genuinely — you cannot truly serve them*

*— Rasheed Ogunlaru, Author*

So, how can one find out how customers are feeling if the research tells us they are not going to be up front and report it to management? There are a number of ways to get the information you need to ensure your service is meeting/exceeding your customers' expectations.

First and foremost, you must empower your frontline staff to receive these comments and either act on them or ensure they are passed up the chain quickly for resolution. By fostering an atmosphere that allows front line staff to forward on complaints without fear of reprisals, you ensure that management is made aware of an additional 45% of comments.

Many facilities also perform regular satisfaction surveys. A venue manager can only know what customers are thinking if you ask. A sample of a customer satisfaction survey is in the Appendix. Or, a manager can survey employees as a means to rate internally the organization's customer service delivery. Results of such surveys can help managers determine if further training is required or if systems and processes need revision. A sample customer service rating worksheet is included in the Appendix.

There are many professional research organizations that will perform customer satisfaction tracking for your facility. Cost is dependent on the extent of the survey and the level of analysis involved with the collected data. The true success of the survey is dependent on the follow-up—surveys should not end up as expensive bookends on the office shelf. Discussions, action plans, monitoring results, and ongoing evaluation must occur to get real value from the process. When conducted appropriately, surveys can also provide insights into the demographics and habits of your customer base.

Another method of research is the employment of the “secret shopper” method. In addition to many professional companies which can conduct these programs, providing a trusted employee, colleague, or friend with tickets to an event and instructions to report back on the experience through a standardized report can provide a lower cost option for feedback. Secret shopper reports offer managers valuable feedback as to the customer experience in your facility. Shoppers are sent out “under cover” as typical customers. They then complete detailed evaluations based on their experiences. Evaluation items can include the visual impact of your facility, cleanliness and maintenance, appearance and friendliness of staff, sales presentation and up-selling techniques, facility/event knowledge, etc.

Secret shopper surveys should be conducted on a regular basis with the results being shared with all areas involved and used as an opportunity for a discussion. They should be positioned as recognition for a job well done or an opportunity to establish new benchmarks for service level improvement. Staff must come to understand what service levels are expected within your organization. A sample secret shopper survey is included in the appendix.

There likely are subject matter experts in the facility that aren't being fully utilized! One such program rewards employees who demonstrate

excellent customer service skills with the opportunity to self-assess their own facility as if they were the CEO. The employees have specific responsibilities to fill out a questionnaire while attending an event at the facility. Employees evaluate all elements of facility management from cleanliness to security.

Anne M. Obarski is a professional secret shopper for her clients. She states that everywhere she works, she finds the shortcomings that facilities need to focus on, and offers these key secrets:

1. Always try to greet the customer warmly. 95% of customers are never greeted upon entering your facility.
2. Display sincere interest in helping the customer. 72% of customers complain employees would not make eye contact when speaking with them and appeared to be “bothered” when the customer asked a question of them.
3. Maintain a pleasant atmosphere. Customers can be the first to tell you if your washrooms are clean or if your signage is clear and helpful. Dirty facilities and untidy concourses can be some of the things that make a customer not want to come back.
4. Motivate employees to always be productive. “*Servers were talking behind the counter,*” or “*I didn’t want to bother the ticket seller because she was behind the counter finishing her dinner.*” These are complaints Ms. Obarski hears frequently. Employees need to understand that customers are not an interruption of their work.
5. Thank the customer for patronizing your facility and invite them to return. Customers leave businesses every day feeling like robots cared for them. “*Thanks and have a nice day.*” Did the employee mean that, or was it just a way to keep a line moving? If you want to increase repeat and referral business, make the last words you have with the customer ones that will make them happy they visited your facility and want to return soon.

### ***21st Century Service***

*“We see our customers as invited guests to a party, and we are the hosts. It’s our job every day to make every important aspect of the customer experience a little bit better.”*

*— Jeff Bezos, CEO, Amazon.com*

Text, email, social media and the Internet have become an important way to interact with and service our customers. Whether through facility websites, social media accounts, customer service email accounts, or the



traditional phone calls, conversations with our customers are now occurring in real time 24/7.

The ability to provide instantaneous feedback to an organization has resulted in the expectation of instantaneous replies and corrections. Additionally, with the rise in mobile and online ticketing purchases, increasing numbers of customers are moving toward mostly electronic interactions with our facilities. Providing customers with a satisfying experience when interacting electronically and communicating via social and online media while ensuring the same levels of customer service is vital to success.

E-messaging (i.e., Social Media, Live Streams, etc) and customer service are no longer new partners. They are the norm in today's tech-centric world. Recent research conducted by E-Satisfy and a separate study conducted by RightNow and Harris Interactive found the following:

- 58% of customers expect a response to a comment on a social networking site. 42% expect a response within a day.
- Almost half of customers contacting companies online have to follow up with a telephone call. Only 30% of electronic customers receive a response to their contact within 24 hours, 18% have to wait seven days, and almost 40% never receive a final response.
- Poor handling of online contacts results in a high level of negative word-of-mouth: dissatisfied online customers tell twice as many people about their experience (both online and off) than satisfied customers.
- 15% of customers who are dissatisfied with electronic customer service will discuss it in an online multiple-user environment like a chat room, which can have thousands of users.

Additional research was completed by Servicesoft, Inc, who commissioned a survey to identify issues customers face with their online experience:

- Of websites providing e-mail, 56% took more than two business days to respond to questions.
- 10% of sites did not provide telephone numbers.

Other concerns raised by the survey included email responses that were too generic, responses that did not use the customer name, and other responses that did not provide any real answers at all.

These findings show that while companies are making progress in the area of online customer service, there is still a need for intelligence, personalization, and integration with other existing methods of customer service. In particular, follow-up is key.

Here are some tips on e-mail “netiquette” as recommended by the on-line company “The Right Answer”:

- Have a quick turnaround time. Respond as quickly as possible.
- Create a standard—every customer email will be responded to within 48 hours.
- Consider the option of auto response that automatically sends a message to customers letting them know their message was received and will be answered in 48 hours.
- Assign a staff person to coordinate incoming messages.
- Responses to customer e-mail should be concise.
- Address the specific need of the customer’s message in the first few lines and keep paragraphs to two or three lines each. To deal with complicated issues, email the customer to request a convenient time to follow up.
- Avoid needless details or company jargon.
- Remember your manners. It is sometimes difficult to convey sentiment or commitment in the electronic world.
- Get creative—one company offers a virtual cup of coffee with every response they send.

### ***The Staff of Life (People)***

*“Sure, it’s our aircraft that fly you places, but it’s really our people who get you there. In fact, our entire corporate culture has been built around caring for you, our guests, by providing a great guest experience.”*

- WestJet Statement on Organizational Culture

*“Customer service shouldn’t just be a department, it should be the entire company.”*

- Tony Hsieh, CEO, Zappos

The greatest challenge to providing quality customer service is to ensure it is a priority with staff at your venue. Everyone, from the CEO to the new intern, is a customer service ambassador for your team. There are four steps required to ensure that customer service is top of mind for everyone:

### **Training:**

According to John Tschohl of the Service Quality Institute, a good customer service training program is worth at least five times its cost. He suggests you take 10% of your advertising budget and use it to train your staff because competent and caring staff is an excellent marketing tool.

To be effective, training must be consistent, continuous, and involve everyone in the venue. When employees have the skills and tools they need, they are more likely to service customers well. Utilize the training to establish clear objectives and provide specific examples, so employees know how you want them to respond in any given situation. An employee may not know how to naturally engage with guests, but with specific language or examples, they'll be well armed to make the first contact.

The primary goals of the training program should be to shape attitudes and behaviors, reinforce basic skills, and keep enthusiasm high. In order to accomplish these goals, Mr. Tschohl recommends introducing new training twice a year. Each employee should be trained within the first two weeks of hiring, and in order to solidify a behavior change, additional training should be provided at least every six months.

Mr. Tschohl states that the secret to designing effective customer service training programs is to capture the attention of the employees and to motivate them to practice what they have learned. He lists five elements that are critical to the design of service training programs:

1. ***Make it fun and entertaining.*** Adults learn effectively when challenged in a lively setting. You can make better points by using humor than by drowning your employees in statistics and theories. Retention rates will be higher. Use a variety of a/v products, written materials, and role-play to vary the pace of each session.
2. ***Focus on fundamentals.*** Remind your employees of the importance of a "thanks," a smile, or a friendly greeting. It is always "I will find out for you," not "I don't know." Keep it simple. Give real life examples of good (and bad) service experiences.
3. ***Use attractive packaging.*** Make sure the materials you use are well packaged and communicate value. Use the same effort you would in producing an annual report or marketing brochure.

4. ***Build training around group interaction.*** An emotional buy-in is best gained through experiential learning. Your facilitator can present key concepts and have employees discuss how these concepts impact your facility. When employees are actively involved in the process, they are more likely to retain the information and put it to use.
5. ***Build your employee's self-esteem.*** Employees who feel good about themselves treat others—including your customers—well. Happy employees = happy customers.

Communication, cooperation, and commitment from top-level management to front line employees are critical to the success of any customer service training program.

### **Empowerment:**

An empowered employee has the authority to make immediate decisions to take care of a customer and is encouraged to take the initiative to resolve issues as they happen. With 45% of all comments being reported only to frontline employees, these quick actions can have a tremendous impact on whether your customer leaves with a positive perception of your facility.

Disney World is seen by most as the epitome of customer service and empowerment. Empowerment is virtually a religion for Disney, with employees who are thoroughly trained and then told that they have the authority to do whatever is necessary to deal with problems on the spot in order to make customers happy. In fact, management interference is discouraged.

The Disney philosophy is reflected in the following statement:

*"Management must not only support the front line, but it must trust it as well".* Disney believes that front line employees should be the first, and last, contact for customers.

As an employer, you must support and reinforce empowered action by employees. There is risk involved with taking matters into their own hands, and employees must be assured they will not be fired or reprimanded if they make mistakes. Imagine your venue having an atmosphere where the consequences are greater for *not* taking empowered action on behalf of a customer, rather than the reverse.

### **Recognition:**

Employees who feel valued are more motivated and provide a higher level of service to your guests. Positive reinforcement and public praise will solidify behaviors. Design a recognition program that "catches people doing things right." Celebrate the smallest successes and do it publicly.

A simple “thank you” goes a long way in motivating employees, according to a study by Accountemps, as reported in the Customer Service Newsletter. *“A motivated staff is the cornerstone of quality customer service,”* says Max Messmer, chairman of Accountemps. *“By acknowledging your employee’s achievements, you let them know their contributions are integral to the organization’s success,”* Messner recommends giving praise publicly. Public acknowledgment of achievements can be quite a morale booster for the individual and the team.

The most effective means of motivating employees, according to the Accountemps research:

- Frequent recognition of accomplishments – 38%
- Regular communication with staff – 37%
- Giving employees regular responsibility – 14%
- Offsite teambuilding and social events – 4%

### **Your Employees as Customers:**

There are a variety of customers that engage with your facility or organization on a daily basis. Perhaps the most often overlooked group are your own employees. The service you provide to them sets the tone for the service they will provide to your guests and customers. Employee needs are not all that different from those of your customers.

Are the work areas and back-of-house areas clean and well maintained? Are they treated fairly and with respect in their interactions? Is there strong communication between management and frontline staff? Without first ensuring that you are properly servicing your employees, any customer service program you create will ultimately just be words on a sheet of paper.

### ***Final Thought***

Providing excellent customer service is an ongoing challenge for all venue managers. As technological developments continue to enhance our ability to communicate with our customers, the theory of what constitutes “good” customer service will continue to evolve. An organization that wishes to stay on the cutting edge must be constantly reviewing and improving their customer service philosophy to ensure they evolve as well.

Betsy Sanders, Nordstrom’s first female Store Manager sums it up best: *“Service, in short, is not what you do, but who you are. It’s a way of living that you need to bring to everything you do if you’re to bring it to your customer interactions.”*

Or, put it another way,

***Be a decent human being.***

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY**

Customer satisfaction is the key to success. You want customers to be happy with the products and services you provide. If they feel they have received good value for their money, your business will prosper. Getting your customers to tell you what's good about your business, and where you need improvement, helps you to be sure that your business measures up to their expectations.

A customer satisfaction survey is one way to gather this vital information. There are any number of ways to get copies to your customers. Historically, copies were included with orders, mailed directly at regular intervals, or sent and received by fax. But in today's digital age, it's easier than ever to provide surveys to our customers. Whether sending through email, creating an online survey link, or developing social media polls/surveys, customer feedback is now just a click away. The important thing to remember is that you should solicit that feedback in whatever manner is convenient for your particular customers. Many surveys won't be completed, but those that are will make it worth your while.

The customer satisfaction survey below is a potential template designed to get your customers to tell you what they really think. No lengthy questions, just a list of key activities and easy ranking selections with additional space to respond if they so desire. Some survey's remove the option of having multiple rating levels, limiting the choices to just "outstanding" and "needs improvement." Doing this sends a clear message that you expect the products and service you supply to be the best available, period. Keeping the survey short makes it more likely that customers will take the time to respond. Be sure to include instructions on how to return the completed surveys. You may also look at providing an incentive to return the survey like an enter-to-win drawing or discount off their next purchase.

Don't forget to follow up on the comments you receive. If you have to change a procedure, tell an employee how you want things done, pick a new delivery service, do it. And advertise the fact that you did. Send thank you notes to the customers whose comments caused you to make a change. Let them know that you can do an even better job because they took the time to help you improve.

Remember, surveys are only as good as the follow-up!

Dear **Client**,

Thank you for **(selecting / returning to)** the **(venue name)** for **(event)**. It is our commitment to assist you in creating successful events by providing outstanding customer service every step of the way.

Your feedback is a vital component of our goal to continuously improve as an organization and as your event partner. Please take a few moments to complete our online survey by [Clicking Here](#).

We appreciate your feedback and your choice of the **(venue name)** for your event needs.

Remember, it is never too early to book next year's event. We will be happy to reserve space for you in 2024!

Warm regards,

XXXXXXXXXX

## ONLINE SURVEY FORM

### Page 1: Facility & Staff Performance

#### Q1

In order to better serve you, please complete the following information:

Event Name

Event Date(s)

Total # of Attendees

Your Name

#### Q2

Please indicate below (in each category) the primary staff member with whom you worked with on your event?

Sales Manager

Event Services

Catering Services

Audio Visual

Parking

Ticketing

Staff Members:

Other (please specify):

### Page 2: Overall Experience

#### Q3

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (great), please rate your overall experience at the Greater Tacoma Convention Center.

(no label)

### Page 3: Overall Value

#### Q4

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (great), please rate the overall value of your event at the Greater Tacoma Convention Center.

(no label)



**Q5**

Please make any comments related to the overall value of your event. There will be another opportunity to rate the value numerically in each of the service provider areas (food & beverage, audio visual, etc).

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**Page 4: Sales Manager Experience****Q6**

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (great), please rate your overall experience working with your Sales Manager.

(no label)

**Q7**

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (great), please rate your experience working with the Sales Manager in the following areas.

Knowledge of facility and services

Response time and follow-up

Quality of service provided

**Q8**

Comments regarding your experience with your Sales Manager

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**Page 5: Event Services Manager Experience****Q9**

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (great), please rate your overall experience working with your Event Services Manager.

(no label)

**Q10**

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (great), please rate your experience working with the Event Services Manager in the following areas.

Pre-event planning

Day of event assistance

Overall communication

**Q11**

Comments regarding your experience with your Event Services Manager

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Page 6: Food and Beverage Experience

**Q12**

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (great), please rate your overall experience working with the Food and Beverage department.

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**Q13**

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (great), please rate your experience with Food and Beverage service in the following areas.

Pre-event planning

Overall quality and presentation of food

Timeliness of food and beverage service

Customer service of food and beverage staff

Value

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**Q14**

Comments regarding your experience with food and beverage service. Please include anything we could do to improve our food and beverage service for your next event.

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Page 7: Audio Visual (PSAV now Encore) Experience

**Q15**

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (great), please rate your overall experience working with PSAV/Encore.

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**Q16**

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (great), please rate your experience with PSAV/Encore in the following areas.

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**Q17**

Comments regarding your experience with PSAV/Encore and audio visual service.

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Page 8: Parking Experience

**Q18**

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (great), please rate your overall experience working with REEF Parking.

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**Q19**

Comments regarding your experience with REEF Parking.

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Page 9: Ticketing Experience

**Q20**

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (great), please rate your overall experience working with Ticketmaster.

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**Q21**

Comments regarding your experience with Ticketmaster.

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Page 10: Destination & Accommodations

**Q22**

How did you hear about us?

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**Q23**

Why did you choose the Greater Tacoma Convention Center?

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**Q24**

Did guests stay overnight in a hotel?

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Page 11: Hotel Experience

**Q25**

Please select the hotel(s) you utilized for overnight accommodations:

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**Q26**

How would you rate your overall hotel experience?

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Page 12: Travel Tacoma + Visitor Information Experience

**Q27**

If you utilized convention services provided by Travel Tacoma - Mt. Rainier, did it meet the needs of your event?

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Page 13: Additional Comments

**Q28**

Please share any additional comments on what we could have done another way that would have made a difference for your event.

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**Q29**

Please share any comments on people or departments you would like recognized for delivering exceptional service.

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**Q30**

May we use your comments for future marketing purposes?

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## APPENDIX B

### CUSTOMER SERVICE RATINGS WORKSHEET (from Wwww. Inc.com)

**Rate Yourself or Your Customer Service Representatives with “Excellent”  
“Good” or “Poor” in each category**

1. Job knowledge. Understand products, services and customer service procedures. You don't have to ask someone down the hall how to do it or look it up in some procedure manual while the customer is waiting.
2. Follow up. You deliver on promises and commitments made to your customers, all of the time. If you promise to call when an item comes in, you do it. If you promise to let the customer know some more information, you do it. If you don't have that information by the time you promised to get back to them, you call the customer to tell them that. And you keep giving updates until you finally get the needed information.
3. Communication. You can clearly express yourself. Customers understand what you are trying to tell them. You don't use a lot of fancy words or technical jargon. You communicate in the customer's language, not yours.
4. Integrity. You adhere to high social and ethical standards. This means no stealing from the company, even an occasional pad of paper or pencil. It means knowing all the ethical ramifications of your business and following them – to the letter.
5. Motivation to serve customers. You derive satisfaction from meeting and exceeding customer needs. You really enjoy serving and helping customers – even the irate ones.
6. Work standards. You constantly strive to meet high standards of customer service. And when you reach your goals, you strive even higher.
7. Customer sensitivity. You show concern for the way customers feel, not just what they say. You can empathize with customer concerns and are good at reading between the lines, to what the customer is not saying, but is feeling.
8. Energy. You remain alert and attentive and work with a high, enthusiastic energy level.
9. Decisiveness. You are willing to take action to address customer needs. You know reasonable boundaries though and seek support when needed. You never say, “That's not my job”.
10. Resilience. You are able to handle job-related pressures when serving the customer. You are able to bounce back and take it professionally, not personally, when a customer “dumps” on you.
11. Judgment. You use all available information, previous experience and training to address customer needs. You know when to give and when to stand your ground to customer demands.

12. Impact. You make a positive impression with your appearance, body language and voice.
13. Planning. You can organize your work day and plan enough time to answer customer needs.
14. Flexibility. You are able to change your service style based on customer needs. You can get right to the point, or you can relax and get chatty, depending on what your customer wants.
15. Initiative. You take action beyond what is normally called for to meet customers. You are constantly looking for ways to delight and surprise your customers with your level of service and anticipate their needs without having to be asked.
16. Persuasiveness. You are able to convince the customer of the benefits of the same or product you represent and are adept at satisfying unhappy customers.