

Top Ten Service Errors in Research Administration

1. Losing a proposal or award
2. Failure to submit financial reports in a timely manner
3. Failure to process documents promptly
4. Failure to bill in a timely manner
5. Failure to respond to phone calls and email
6. Allowing voicemail to become full
7. Failure to be clear and concise in communications
8. Failure in following up on negotiations
9. Promising a response by a certain date and failing to deliver
10. Saying NO without some consideration of other options

Source: David Richardson and the Panel

Ten Deadly Phrases

1. It's not my job.
2. I/we won't do that.
3. I/we can't do that.
4. It's university policy/procedure.
5. You'll have to . . .
6. Please call back.
7. I don't know.
8. But.
9. No.
10. Let me get this straight. You claim . . .

Ten Magic Phrases

1. How may I help you?
2. Let me suggest . . .
3. I'd like to ask you . . .
4. It's my pleasure . . .
5. Please . . .
6. Thank you . . .
7. You're welcome . . .
8. I'd be happy to . . .
9. Yes

One more...

10. I can definitely help you resolve that issue today. If it's TRUE, nothing gives your customer a better feeling. If it's not true and you tell them anyway, it's the kiss of death.

Source: Adapted from Customer Service initiative at Tennessee State University, Nashville TN

Customers as Individuals

The People aspect of business is really what it is all about. If we think of customers as individuals, we realize our business is our customer, not our product or services. Putting all the focus on the services our office offers leaves out the most important component: each individual customer.

1. Remember there is no way that the quality of customer service can exceed the quality of the people who provide it. Think you can get by paying the lowest wage, giving the fewest of benefits, doing the least training for your employees? It will show. Companies don't help customers... people do.

2. Realize that your people will treat your customer the way they are treated.

Employees take their cue from management. Do you greet your employees enthusiastically each day; are you polite in your dealings with them; do you try to accommodate their requests; do you listen to them when they speak? Consistent rude customer service is a reflection not as much on the employee as on management.

3. Do you know who your customers are? If a regular customer came in to your office, would you recognize them? Could you call them by name? All of us like to feel important; calling someone by name is a simple way to do it and lets them know you value them as customers.

4. Do your customers know who you are? If they see you, would they recognize you? Could they call you by name? A visible management is an asset.

5. For good customer service, go the extra mile. Include a thank-you note in a customer's package; clip the article when you see their name or photo in print; write a congratulatory note when they get a promotion. There are all sorts of ways for you to keep in touch with your customers and bring them closer to you.

6. Are your customers greeted when they walk in the door or at least within 30-40 seconds upon entering? Is it possible they could come in, look around, and go out without ever having their presence acknowledged?

7. Give customers the benefit of the doubt.

Proving to him why he's wrong and you're right isn't the point. (Try to avoid putting a faculty member in that position.)

8. If a customer makes a request for something special, do everything you can to say yes. The fact that a customer cared enough to ask is all you need to know in trying to accommodate her. It may be an exception from your office policy, but (if it isn't illegal) try to do it

9. Are your front line staff properly trained in how to handle a complaint or an irate person?

Give them guidelines for what to say and do in every conceivable case. People on the frontline of a situation play the most critical role in your customer's experience. Make sure they know what to do and say to make that customer's experience a positive, pleasant one.

10. Want to know what your customers think of your office? Ask them!

Source: ServiceUntitled.com. Written by Liz Tahir and adapted by Cindy White

Customer Perceptions of Service

1. Reliability (Deliver, Perform)

How did the proposal submission go?

2. Responsiveness (Speed, Urgency)

Did I get back to you in the time frame you expected?

3. Assurance (Credibility, Competence)

Did we take ownership of your issue? Did you trust us?

4. Empathy (Caring, Understanding)

Did we listen and show concern for the situation?

5. Tangibles (Appearance, Atmosphere)

Was the office environment efficient and reassuring?

Source: Zeithaml, Valerie A, Parasuraman and Berry. Delivering Quality Service; Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations. Free Press, 1990.

Sample Negotiation Guidelines

The following should be processed within **three** business days of initial assignment:

- No-cost extensions
- Supplemental funds
- Incremental funds
- Unilateral grants
- Administrative changes
- Field trial grants
- Work orders issued under a Master Agreement

The following should be processed within **ten** business days of initial assignment:

- Bilateral grants
- Subawards/Subcontracts
- Testing agreements
- Release of Final Payment

The following should be processed within **twenty** business days of initial assignment:

- Contracts
- Industrial purchase orders
- All other agreements

Source: David Richardson

Negotiator Status Report

Negotiator Name	Federal: 0-14		State: 0-14		Industry: 0-14		Other: 0-14		Federal: 15-28		State: 15-28		Industry: 15-28		Other: 15-28		Federal: 29+		State: 29+		Industry: 29+		Other: 29+		Total		FY YTD Total			
XXXXXXXXXX	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	123	
XXXXXXXXXX	3	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	19	35
XXXXXXXXXX	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	14	45
XXXXXXXXXX	-	-	-	-	3	2	1	3	-	-	-	-	3	1	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	20	-	-	48	-
XXXXXXXXXX	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	7	14	-	-	-	86	-
XXXXXXXXXX	5	1	-	-	-	6	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	2	5	-	-	5	-	-	-	4	3	29	-	-	-	50	-	
XXXXXXXXXX	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
XXXXXXXXXX	1	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	1	-	1	17	-	-	-	46	-
XXXXXXXXXX	2	-	-	-	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	22	-	-	-	76	-	
XXXXXXXXXX	-	-	-	-	2	3	3	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	1	15	-	-	-	28	-	
XXXXXXXXXX	4	-	-	-	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	17	-	-	-	57	-	
XXXXXXXXXX	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	8	-	-	18	-	
XXXXXXXXXX	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	50	-	
XXXXXXXXXX	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	2	-	1	1	-	1	1	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	2	19	-	-	-	51	-	
XXXXXXXXXX	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
XXXXXXXXXX	2	2	-	-	-	1	3	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	-	-	43	-	
XXXXXXXXXX	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	37	-	
XXXXXXXXXX	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	2	2	11	-	-	-	56	-	
XXXXXXXXXX	4	-	-	-	-	7	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	20	-	-	-	59	-	
XXXXXXXXXX	-	-	-	-	1	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	14	-	-	-	67	-	
XXXXXXXXXX	2	1	1	1	1	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	21	-	-	-	59	-	

A few of the Ten Commandments of Customer Service

1. Be a good listener. Take the time to identify customer needs by asking questions and concentrating on what the customer is really saying. Listen to their words, tone of voice, body language, and most importantly, how they feel. Beware of making assumptions - thinking you intuitively know what the customer wants.
2. Identify and anticipate needs. Customers don't buy products or services. They buy good feelings and solutions to problems. Most customer needs are emotional rather than logical. The more you know your customers, the better you become at anticipating their needs. Communicate regularly so that you are aware of problems or upcoming needs.
3. Make customers feel important and appreciated. Treat them as individuals. Always use their name. Customers are very sensitive and know whether or not you really care about them.
4. Help customers understand your systems. Your organization may have the world's best systems for getting things done, but if customers don't understand them, they can get confused, impatient and angry. Take time to explain how your systems work and how they simplify transactions.
5. Appreciate the power of "Yes". Always look for ways to help your customers. When they have a request (as long as it is reasonable) tell them that you can do it. Figure out how afterwards. Look for ways to make doing business with you easy. Always do what you say you are going to do.
6. Know how to apologize. When something goes wrong, apologize. It's easy and customers like it. Deal with problems immediately and let customers know what you have done. Make it simple for customers to complain. Value their complaints. As much as we dislike it, it gives us an opportunity to improve.
7. Get regular feedback. Encourage and welcome suggestions about how you could improve. There are several ways in which you can find out what customers think and feel about your services.
 - a. Listen carefully to what they say.
 - b. Check back regularly to see how things are going.
 - c. Provide a method that invites constructive criticism, comments and suggestions.
8. Treat employees well. Employees are your internal customers and need a regular dose of appreciation. Thank them and find ways to let them know how important they are. Treat your employees with respect and chances are they will have a higher regard for customers. Treating customers and employees well is equally important.

Source: ServiceUntitled.com. From Susan A. Friedmann, About.com Marketing

Tips from the Police: Verbal Judo

- Project calmness: Move and speak slowly, quietly and confidently.
- Be an empathetic listener: Encourage the person to talk and listen patiently.
- Focus your attention on the other person to let them know you are interested in what they have to say.
- Maintain a relaxed posture and position yourself at a right angle rather than directly in front of the other person.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings. Indicate that you can see he or she is upset.
- Use delaying tactics that will give the person time to calm down. For example, offer a drink of water.
- Be reassuring and point out choices. Break big problems into smaller, more manageable problems.
- Accept criticism in a positive way. When a complaint might be true, use statements like "You're probably right" or "It was my fault." If the criticism seems unwarranted, ask clarifying questions.
- Ask for his recommendations. Repeat back to him what you feel he is requesting of you.

And, just in case, arrange yourself so that a visitor cannot block your access to an exit.

HIRING the RIGHT PEOPLE

1. You must have an excellent understanding of your organizational climate.

Look for candidates who will flow in the “current” of your organization. It will eliminate placing “square pegs in round holes.”

2. Identify Customer Service Representatives in your organization who display the skills and abilities you are looking for in your organization.

- Identify what makes them successful and develop a profile of the type of employee you are looking for based on someone who meets or exceeds your expectations.
- Match prospective employees with the profile.
 - Know which skills and abilities in the profile are absolutes and which ones are negotiable.
 - Which skills can be taught and which can't be taught.
 - Clearly articulate the skills and abilities you are looking for in the published job description and ensure that each of your prospective candidates has at a minimum 80% of those qualities.

Two qualities that you should see in prospective CSR candidates are *excellent problem-solving* and *an innate desire to help people*. If finding solutions is not enjoyable to the prospective candidates, they may not be the right person for the job.

3. Create behavior-based questions that will be part of the screening process throughout the entire interview process. There should be key indicators that you are listening for during the actual interview. Based on your research, you should know when a prospective candidate is credible and when they are making it up as they go. Listen for inconsistencies during the interview. Look for inconsistencies on the resume/cover letter they provided.

4. Along with skills and abilities, **personality does matter when hiring Customer Service Representatives**. According to Robert Cialdini, “People do business with people they like.” If your Customer Service Representatives are not pleasant, patient and knowledgeable, they will only hurt your business. Personality is not something you can teach someone in a new hire training class. The people you hire should bring that to the table when they come into your organization.

Source: ServiceUntitled.com

Material derived by Darlene S. McDaniel from “Delivering and Measuring Customer Service,”

Hanks, 2008

Leadership Reinforcement Tips

1. Remain calm even in the most stressful of circumstances for colleagues have a tendency to adopt the attitude of their peers.
2. Be courteous and respectful of all inquiries.
3. Treat all inquiries the same regardless of the investigator, the sponsor, or the dollar amount in question.
4. Hire individuals with service oriented personalities.
5. Align staff workloads to personalities.
6. Align staff workloads to professional competencies.
7. Review workload often to ensure that customer service is not being sacrificed because staff members are overworked.
8. Always maintain a positive attitude toward work.
9. Advocate for additional resources when needed.
10. Try to be as transparent as possible when working with faculty, staff, and sponsors.

Areas of Customer Experience

Measurement and improvement of 5 basic customer experience areas:

1. The *Service* they came to buy
2. The *Person* or *Team* that delivered it
3. The *Process* of doing business with your organization
4. The *Atmosphere, Location, or Method* that encompassed it
5. The *Confidence* and *Reassurance* they've felt during their experience

Source: Richard Hanks, Mindshare (a company that surveys the customer experience)