

Customer Service

Dealing with Difficult People

Rob Lynch
Training Coordinator
Small Urban and Rural Transit Center

NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER



What is good customer service?

- One word you think describes good customer service...

NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Great customer service...

- **Attitude**
- **Communication**
- **Resolution (5-steps)**
 1. Listen for understanding
 2. Discover the reason for dissatisfaction
 3. Request solutions
 4. Execute solutions
 5. Follow up

attitude

noun at-ti-tude

: the way you think and feel about someone or something

: a feeling or way of thinking that affects a person's behavior

: a way of thinking and behaving that people regard as unfriendly, rude, etc.

**Attitude is communicated to others
in three ways:**

7% by words

38% by tone of voice

55% in non-verbal mannerisms

Your Best Attitude Traits

- Patience
- Integrity
- Tact
- Courage
- Fairness
- Discipline
- Decisiveness

Your Best Attitude Traits

- Willingness to accept responsibility
- Willingness to take risks
- Ability to take pressure
- Determination
- Consistency
- Staying Positive



Telephone Do's

- Answer with "Hello," "Good Morning/Afternoon," and then the business name
- Put on a smile BEFORE answering the phone
- Speak in a clear tone using a voice that is neither too loud, or too soft
- Ask permission to place a person on hold

- Shoretel.com

NDSU

UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Telephone Do's

- Identify yourself
- When the caller is speaking, listen without interrupting
- Always return phone calls if a return has been promised
- When transferring a call, confirm the person is available or confirm the call will go to voice mail

- Shoretel.com

NDSU

UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Telephone Don'ts

- Answer on the first ring
- No eating, chewing, drinking, etc.
- Rudeness, use of slang, argue, swear
- Never say "I don't know"...use "I'll check on that for you"
- Do not end a call without a positive closure: "Thank you for calling"... "Have a good day"

- Shoretel.com

NDSU

UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Email Etiquette

1. Clear direct subject line
2. Use a professional email address
3. Think twice before hitting 'Reply All'
4. Include a signature block
5. Use professional salutations
6. Use exclamation points sparingly
7. Be cautious with humor

Businessinsider.com

NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Email Etiquette

8. Reply to your emails
9. Proofread every message
10. Add the email address last
11. Double check you selected the correct recipient
12. Use classic fonts
13. **Nothing is confidential**

Businessinsider.com

NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Transit Operations



NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Transit Operations

- Clear, succinct communications with passengers
 - Informed staff
 - Rider guides
 - Customer surveys
 - Driver and dispatcher feedback
 - Travel training

Transit Operations

- Handling rider complaints
 - If a rider complains, in addition to acknowledging the concern you must document facts surrounding the complaint:
 - Time
 - Bus or Route #
 - Driver
 - Specifics of what was reported

Transit Operations

General rider policies

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Fare payment | • Pets (not service animals) |
| • Fare structure | • Disruptive or unsafe behavior on board |
| • Smoking | • Flag stops |
| • Eating and drinking | • Car seats |
| • Playing personal sound devices | • Strollers |
| • Number of shopping bags or personal effects | • Inclement weather and closure |

Transit Operations

- Rider policies specific to paratransit
 - No shows
 - Door-to-door vs. curb-to-curb policy
 - Wait time
 - Cancellation policy
 - Unaccompanied minors
 - Eligibility (if applicable)
 - Advanced reservation requirements

Resolving Customer Conflicts



"Ready for your first lesson in conflict resolution?"

3 Primary Strategies

- **Flight** - avoiding conflict and hoping that it will go away
- **Fight** - using authority, rights or force to attempt to prevail over others
- **Unite** - talking with other people to develop solutions that will satisfy mutual interests, some result that they all can "live with"

5 Steps

- Listen for understanding**
- Discover the reason for dissatisfaction**
- Request solution(s)**
- Execute the solution(s)**
- Follow-up on the plan**

NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER


Listen for Understanding

- The first step of customer conflict resolution is: **Let people tell their story**
- When people are upset, they need to get their story out. While allowing people to "speak their minds" can sometimes increase the level of conflict, if conducted properly, it can begin the process of resolution

NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Listen for Understanding

- However, there is little point in trying to talk when people are **too** upset. Give a **little** time and let tempers cool down
- If possible, set a specific time for addressing the issue



NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Listen for Understanding

- Sometimes feeling like he/she is finally "heard" can dramatically change an angry person's outlook
- New information may come to light that allows a solution to emerge naturally
- Everyone's point of view needs to be honored

Listen for Understanding

- Conflicts can be managed productively if you invest the time and effort to understand what the problem is and demonstrate respectful behavior when trying to resolve the issues
- Require all parties to behave in a respectful manner as the discussions progress

Discover the Reason for Conflict

- Often parties are so focused on minutiae that they lose sight of the big picture and its implications
- Bring people back to reality by wrenching their attention away from the "grain of sand" and focusing on the "whole beach"
- Check out assumptions. Some perceptions could be inaccurate

Discover the Reason for Conflict

- Strong emotions are both a cause and result of conflict
- People in conflict often have a variety of strong & negative emotions
- These emotions often conceal the true issue in dispute

Discover the Reason for Conflict

- Deal with behaviors, not personalities
- Remain calm
- Maintain eye contact with all parties
- Don't be afraid of silence
- Appear firm, strong & unemotional
- Don't act out of impulse – think out your strategy

Discover the Reason for Conflict

- You can learn a lot about how the parties see a dispute by paying attention to body language and listening closely not only to their words but to the emotional tone behind their words
- Watch for eye contact between the parties and with you



Request Solutions

- Begin negotiating (problem solving) with any points of agreement – no matter how vague – instead of points of disagreement
- Establish common ground

NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Request Solutions

- Everyone will have their own vision of an ideal outcome for themselves
- The challenge is to avoid forcing our solutions but rather allow solutions to emerge out of input on everyone's part
- Be on the lookout for signals that support a cooperative environment

NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Request Solutions

- People tend to get stuck in their positions because they're looking at it from a narrow viewpoint and a negative tone. They *can't* see the situation any other way unless you help them to do so
- As the mediator, re-tell the story from a neutral standpoint in a forward-looking, positive constructive point of view

NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Request Solutions

- In every conflict, ask yourself:
“What is the true motivating factor?”
“What is really keeping this person from agreeing to a solution?”
- Determine what everyone needs from the situation and strive for a win/win solution where some of each person's needs are being met

NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Request Solutions

- Avoid ultimatums and never threaten an action you don't intend to follow through to its conclusion
- If you find yourself making threats in order to enforce your position, you are not being effective at resolving conflict

NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

Request Solutions

- Choose the best idea that everyone can live with
- Find solutions that all parties feel are fair under the circumstances or where each can take away a small win

Execute the Solution

- Lay out the specific solution
- Plan ways to work together that will keep future emotional outbursts or conflicts to a minimum

Execute the Solution

- Occasionally, there is no middle ground and an executive decision needs to be made. The important part is the process still needs to be followed, and when no resolution is imminent, you can move forward with a decision that meets the best interest of the agency

Follow-up

- The decision should be documented and all parties must understand the specific expectations as well as their roles and responsibilities in complying with the decision
- This step is easily overlooked when the "fighting" has stopped
- Solutions need to be sustainable

5 Steps

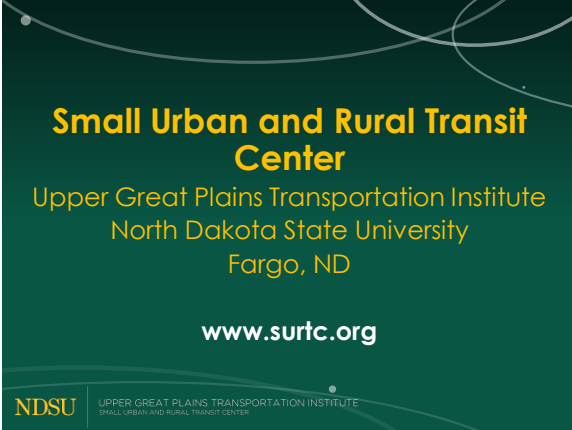
- Listen for understanding
- Discover the reason for dissatisfaction
- Request solution(s)
- Execute the solution(s)
- Follow-up on the plan

The Simple Truths of Service



Inspired by Johnny the bagger

By Ken Blanchard & Barbara Glaser



Small Urban and Rural Transit Center
Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute
North Dakota State University
Fargo, ND

www.surfc.org

NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT CENTER
