

Improving Service Delivery

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It is often said that first impressions counts. This is an ideal that every employer and businessman would want to promote. Equally so, it would be expected that any employee who offers service to customers doing business, would appreciate that how he/she is perceived by the customer, invariably counts for something. Presentation and deportment are two characteristics that can make the individual who is on the receiving end feel welcome and accepted.

Frontline employees in particular, should always be exposed to customer service training. As a matter of fact such training should be mandatory within the service sector. The fallout from the display of poor attitude and manners can be devastating to any business place. This act of indiscipline may be associated with the personality of the individual employee, where there is a blatant disregard for order and for what is appropriate. Such indifferent behaviour may also be tied to apparent poor self esteem. This might be far from the case, for it quite possible that those who perform roles or duties which give them a semblance of power and authority also act in an unprofessional manner. The downside to this is that it lends to signs of resentment being displayed by the individual with whom contact was made.

There can be no excuse for such behaviour where it exists. It is imperative that this is not condoned. Let's take a look at some of the shortcoming that the public has to wrestle with on a daily basis. There is the common complaint of the poor service being rendered in business places. Some customers speak of being ignored or dismissed, and being treated in a discourteous manner. Others remark about the aggressive behaviour of workers, poor manners displayed, and despicable verbal and non verbal actions. The fallout from all of this is the confrontation that arises between the employee and the customer. Scenes such as these can do little to enhance the image of the enterprise.

They may be some of us who may wish to bury our heads in the sand and pretend that this is not a significant problem. The harsh reality is that this has serious implications for the survival of some businesses. Where the management fails to pay attention to such matters, this can result in a fall off in patronage which the business attracted. The fact that negative publicity can ruin a business, should be enough to cause management to hold its employees to maintaining standards of excellence.

Management has to be careful not to compromise itself by indulging in hiring practices where little or no attention is paid to the suitability of the individual to be hired to do the job. Employees who have to interface with the public in their line of work, should at the minimal give a signal to the customer or client that he/she is approachable. It would be expected that employees within the service sector would demonstrate a level of tolerance and patience. These are not characteristics that are engrained in all persons. It is for this purpose that suitability for the job is determined as important. Providing training may be a one way of addressing this problem, albeit it might not make a difference, as some persons find it hard to break bad habits.

Employees who recognize that they have shortcomings which can potentially reduce their ability to offer acceptable customer service, should attempt to avail themselves of training, so as to help them to improve on their deficiency. Since there is merit in being your brothers' keeper, work colleagues can play a part through the medium of peer reviews, in helping each other to improve on areas of weakness.