



JUST TOUCHING BASE

How Customer Service Can Serve Your Nonprofit

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NONPROFIT RISK MANAGEMENT CENTER

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What is a Customer?

“someone who buys goods or services from a business”

— Merriam-Webster Dictionary

- Does this definition work for nonprofits?
- How are nonprofits different from for-profits?



Defining the Customer

- Nonprofits exist to serve others
- “Customers” are any stakeholders supporting the mission of your nonprofit
- **Who does this include?**

Defining the Customer

- **Clients (consumers)** – served by the nonprofit
- **Staff** – ensure the continued operation of the nonprofit
- **Volunteers** – support the work of the nonprofit
- **Donors** – ensure the continued survival of the nonprofit

Why Do Nonprofits Need Good Customer Service?

- **Complexity** - several groups of “customers”
- **Connectivity** – nonprofits aren’t immune to negativity

Customer Service & Risk Management

- **Interest** – Loss of interest in your nonprofit & its mission
- **Communication** - Failure to communicate the value added of your nonprofit’s programs and activities
- **Under-Appreciation** – donors look to donate to other nonprofits due to a lack of outward appreciation

Customer Service & Risk Management

- **Marketing** – clients are unaware of new programs and services provided
- **Training** – staff & volunteers don't have the information needed to be successful stewards of your nonprofit's mission
- **Reputation** – a negative perception of your nonprofit's work & activities is affecting your reach

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Managing the Risk

- **Interest**
 - Engage customers in the work and activities of your nonprofit (**social media campaigns, ads, events & outreach**)
- **Communication**
 - Reach out to stakeholders and show them **how** your work adds value, and **why** you need them for success

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Managing the Risk

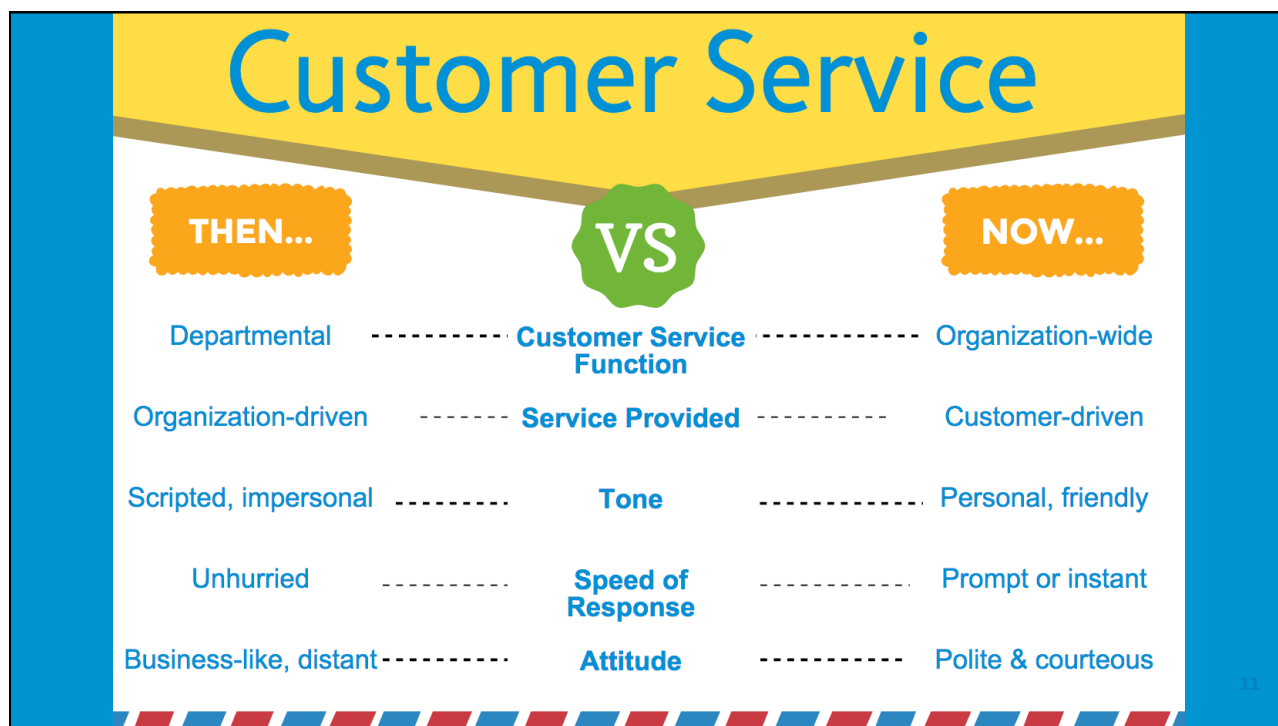
- **Under-Appreciation**
 - Have a plan for donor, client & volunteer retention; remember to be thankful for those who assist in the mission-critical work & success of your nonprofit
- **Marketing**
 - Reach out to your community and past supporters

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Managing the Risk


- **Training** – give your supporters all the information they need to be as effective as possible
- **Reputation** – proactively manage your reputation by having an online presence, having positive interactions, and helping your community

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Evolution of Customer Service

- **Immediate access, anytime**
 - Social media
 - *Self-help*: Online forms, applications & resources
- **Customer-centric relations**
 - Personalized experience, customer-driven



Nonprofit Risk Management Center
Find the answer here | nonprofitrisk.org

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Evolution of Customer Service

- **Ability to go elsewhere**
 - Ease of finding alternatives, changing service providers or organizations, and shifting focus after a bad experience
- **Peer review**
 - One unhappy person can change the community's view of your organization (social media, websites, word-of-mouth)

Customer Service DOs & DON'Ts

Customer Service DOs

Tips to help you cover all your bases

Create a Customer Centered Culture

- Internal customer care is just as important as external customer care
 - Conscientious work, timeliness and accuracy
- Good service involves demonstrating excellence and good work in all tasks associated with the nonprofit

Create a Customer Centered Culture

- Even with the best strategic plan, without a positive culture in your nonprofit, you'll have difficulty working toward mission-success

Plan to Exceed Expectations

- Emphasize that all work done by your nonprofit is connected
- Acknowledge that every person involved with your nonprofit will play a role in how it is perceived

Plan to Exceed Expectations

- Give your customers the ability to get in touch with you
 - Make it easy
- Always, always, respond to questions and requests from your customers
 - Have a plan for *how long* you have to respond

Equip Your Staff & Volunteers

- Provide **orientation** and **training** focused on the goals of your mission and the important role each person plays
- Give others the ability to be the most effective advocates for your nonprofit

Equip Your Staff & Volunteers

- Provide training and information to help your staff and volunteers be more effective & efficient
 - Policies
 - Multiple channels of access (online, phone)
- Emphasize the importance of consistently high-quality customer service

Customer Service DON'Ts

Avoid striking out with your customers

DON'T

Set Aside Difficult Questions

- Putting off difficult tasks won't make them any easier, and it may frustrate your customers
 - Give the best possible response, as soon as you can

DON'T

Avoid Accountability

- If you make a mistake, acknowledge it, and learn from it
 - Be proactive and reach out to your customers before they need help

DON'T

Overlook Customers Working For You

- **Your volunteers and staff already support your mission**—keep them on your side by showing appreciation and giving them the support they need

Customer Service HOMERUN

- **DO:** create a customer-centric culture, plan for success, and provide training and support to your customers
- **DON'T:** set aside the hard questions or projects, avoid accountability for your role, or overlook the customers who already support your nonprofit's mission