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Moving from Good to Great Service: Developing and Implementing Quality Standards

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CORNHUSKER ECONOMICS

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension

Moving from Good to Great Service: Developing and Implementing Quality Standards

Market Report	Yr Ago	4 Wks Ag	8/24/12
<u>Livestock and Products,</u>			
<u>Weekly Average</u>			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight.	\$113.01	\$115.42	\$120.78
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb.	146.23	143.87	163.93
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb.	135.80	137.62	146.62
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass.	187.25	178.06	193.47
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated.	92.11	92.66	79.84
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass, 51-52% Lean.	104.04	92.27	86.85
Slaughter Lambs, Ch. & Pr., Heavy, Woolled, South Dakota, Direct.	*	103.50	101.50
National Carcass Lamb Cutout, FOB.	407.57	329.30	321.01
<u>Crops,</u>			
<u>Daily Spot Prices</u>			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu.	7.78	8.24	7.98
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Nebraska City, bu.	7.53	7.99	8.04
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Nebraska City, bu.	14.04	16.69	17.39
Grain Sorghum, No. 2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt.	12.86	13.20	13.21
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, MN, bu.	3.94	3.96	3.97
<u>Feed</u>			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton.	185.00	242.50	242.50
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton.	117.50	192.50	220.00
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good Nebraska, ton.	85.00	155.00	155.00
Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture, Nebraska Average.	210.00	330.25	312.50
Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture, Nebraska Average.	70.50	119.00	118.00
*No Market			

Does your business have standards for customer service? You may be thinking, “I’m a business with just a couple of employees so implementing good customer service is not a problem – we just do it.” Well, that may be true now, but what happens when you hire a new employee? Do they know what is expected? How do you communicate to them the importance of delivering exceptional customer service?

For those businesses with customer service standards - it is one thing to *develop* standards for your business. It is quite another to incorporate them *into* your business, so that every person from the custodian to the business owner models those standards as a part of their everyday work behavior. For instance, how many businesses suggest ways for employees to incorporate service behaviors so it becomes a personal habit and a part of the business culture? Doing this extra step can take **good** service to **great** service.

With all the demands on small business owners, developing customer service standards can often be overlooked. For many businesses, employee customer service training is something that is learned on the job – it often “just happens” as a result of the basic desire to help someone.

However, if a business wants to stand out above the competition, it will need to be more deliberate about their service image. The business will need to identify what service standards they want to be known for, and how those standards can be translated into everyday behaviors incorporated by all the employees in the business. The process is not difficult, but it does take some thought.



What are service quality standards? They are:

- Operational priorities and criteria that ensure consistent delivery of guest service.

They help:

- Set organizational and employee standards for decision making.
- Prioritize the details of service delivery.
- Allow consistent measurement of service delivery.

The Process of Developing Service Standards:

Step #1: Think about the words and phrases that describe the kind of service your **customers expect from you**, and write them down. Some examples would be: “courteous,” “respectful,” “helpful,” “knowledgeable,” etc.

Step #2: Now start another list and write words and phrases to describe the ideal level of service you provide. The list might include such things as “being responsive to calls and contacts,” “making accommodation for special needs,” “having information on additional local resources available,” etc. These two lists can be similar, but often they include different words and phrases.

Step #3: Take the two lists and cluster similar words and phrases together. For instance, one way to cluster the examples above would be to put the words “courteous,” “respectful” and “helpful” together with the phrase “making accommodations for special needs.” Strive for developing four or five clusters that really resonate with your customers and your business.

Step #4: Choose a word(s) that best describes or defines each cluster. This becomes your service quality standard. Once you have the words or titles of each of the clusters, rank them in order of importance with the number one priority being not negotiable with either your customers or with how you deliver service. In other words, the number one item has to be critical to your business and must be delivered.

Using the example above, if the cluster is “courteous,” “respectful,” “helpful” and “making accommodations for special needs,” perhaps the title of that cluster is “meet them where they are.”

Step #5: Once you have the standard identified, the next step is to select behaviors that managers, current employees and new employees can adopt

which will not only maintain but strengthen the standard.

For instance, let’s say you are an agri-tourism business that includes horseback riding as part of the business. Some of your customers may have never ridden a horse before, and actually may be a little afraid of the experience once they are confronted with the opportunity. A standard, “meet them where they are” might include the following behaviors: 1) for the manager - to implement customer reservation training that includes techniques to reassure potential customers who have not ridden very much that the staff are knowledgeable and experienced and the horses are very forgiving; 2) for current employees - to develop a scripted list of riding “do’s and don’ts” that help ensure a safe and successful ride, regardless of their level of experience, and 3) for new employees - to respond confidently to the top five questions customers typically ask about horseback riding, and to actively seek out answers to questions that they don’t know.

Ideally, the process of developing service standards would involve all of the employees. Everyone needs to understand what the priorities are and how their behavior, regardless of where they are in the business, impacts the customer service of that business. Once the process is initiated, the standards should be reviewed as a group and behaviors fine-tuned over time, with the ultimate goal of creating a business culture of customer service excellence.

Yes, developing customer service quality standards does take some time, but moving from **good** to **great** service is worth the effort.

Note: One of the resources, *Disney Approach to Quality Service*, (2008), Lake Buena Vista, FL: Disney Institute, was a participant guidebook for the Disney Quality Service Institute.

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