

# Service assessment

It's never too late for a self-evaluation. **By Pamela Schuck**

**A**s one year ends and another begins, it's a good time for businesses to conduct service assessments.

A service assessment provides an opportunity to evaluate elements of your customer service team and plan for improvements.

There are eight factors seen in successful customer service organizations that you can use in assessing whether your business is in providing quality service.

## Clear vision of service

An organization and everyone in it should have a vision that defines expectations of service. The vision must be communicated and understood by everyone.

## Responsiveness to customers' expectations

You must listen to customers and respond to what you hear. Regularly ask your clients what their expectations are, especially when problems occur. Follow-up is critical. And pay attention to the little things that are important to customers.

## Regularly evaluate service performance

Ask customers how they can be better served. Seek information that can help improve service quality. Ask customers and ask employees. Set clear standards for response time to customer inquiries, questions, complaints and other contacts and correspondence. Share that information with all employees.

## Recognize and reward employees

By providing recognition and reward for exemplary service, you make a statement about its importance. Employees who go above and beyond for customers need to be recognized and rewarded.

Look for employees who take a personal interest in helping customers resolve concerns, and hold them up as role models and reward them in a tangible way. Encourage everyone to look for better ways to serve the customer, and be willing to make changes to policy and procedures based on employee suggestions.

## Provide training

Employees need to be trained to anticipate customer needs, solve problems and exceed customer expectations. Management should act as coaches, working with teams and one on one. Update the staff on changing customer expectations.



Departmental teams and the company team as a whole should meet regularly to share ideas, concerns, problems and solutions. And make sure employees are well trained on all products and services.

## Review systems, policies and procedures

Systems, policies and procedures can make it easy for customers to do business with you or make it a nightmare. A client should not have to work at being your customer.

## Look at the link between sales and service

Coordination between sales and service is critical. If sales and service are not working in a coordinated team.

## Commitment of all

It's difficult to deliver quality service. Commitment to service excellence in an organization is aided or deterred by the faith and confidence employees have in others to the same.

Employees lose enthusiasm for providing quality service if some within the organization put forth no effort. So build a culture of service excellence and team effort throughout the organization.

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