

What other service providers in the Network have said

Organisations that deliver great customer service consistently do the following:

- All staff are on board with being respectful and responsive to whoever walks in the door
- Expectations of staff are made clear in recruitment practices and job descriptions
- Strategic planning at a Board/management level reflects a commitment to strong customer service
- Policies are in place that reflect organisational expectations
- The value of good customer service is upheld and modelled by managers/leaders
- Staff make people feel welcome and comfortable with a non-judgmental approach
- Staff dress casually so as not to be intimidating
- The organisation creates an informal work environment so as not to be intimidating
- Managers promote good practice by reviewing and discussing staff customer service practices in supervision and monthly staff meetings
- Organisations invest in detailed induction of new staff and volunteers
- There is close supervision of reception workers
- Workers are well trained and have the information and resources they need to assist people
- Organisations undertake self-evaluation and have a healthy complaints culture
- Actively look for quality – understand what works and what does not, repeat what works
- Self-care ... hard for staff to be friendly if they are burnt out
- Understand and focus on what can we do for people at the essential point of contact

How do organisations create a culture of great customer service?

- Culture is role-modelled from manager level down
- Encourage genuine empathy and compassion is valued
- Privacy and professionalism is taken seriously
- Act quickly on complaints and feedback
- Good systems and procedures ensure communication is clear
- Staff understand and can communicate reasonable limitations to manage expectations
- Staff are well trained and supported in their roles.
- 'How well' service is delivered is high on strategic plan and team meetings.
- Welcome opportunities for client feedback via surveys, discussion groups, questionnaires

What can Linker organisations do to promote a customer service culture across the Network?

- Build trust through regular meetings and communication
- Encourage and support relevant training opportunities, sharing of knowledge and examples of good practice
- Mentoring for managers and staff across the Network
- Have agreed consequences for organisations who give clients bad experiences
- Shared branding to let clients know that they will receive a consistent quality service from Linker partners
- Invite client feedback between organisations

Customer Service Culture

Tips managers can give staff:

Let them see your smile

- Be positive... let them see your smile. A positive experience and a worker that makes a positive impression will go a long way.

Let your unhappy clients guide you

- Listen to those that are dissatisfied and act on their advice when it rings true. Find out as much detail as possible. How can you improve overall, not just the end problem?

Put the client at the heart of your decisions

- Put the client at the heart of your decisions and take a balanced approach.
- Be focused on problem solving, not on the process.

Set the right expectations

- Be precise and clear in your communication, so you control the expectations you create. Keep your promises.

Be prepared to have multiple interaction approaches

- As a client, I expect your staff to adapt his or her style to meet mine, so that we have a good rapport and your service feels like a 'fit' for me. It is important that the client feels as if they are your number-one client, regardless of the number of clients you serve.

Tone is very important

- Always use positive words with a genuine interest in the client's needs.

Personalise the customer experience

- Customers want to be treated as individuals, not as statistics
- No matter whether I tweeted you, called you, sent an email, put a post on your Facebook page, or a combination of all of those, you know who I am, what I need and where it's up to.

Share client feedback to the wider network

- If people are constantly hearing the same clients complaints, get your staff to relay these complaints back to people who can act on the issues, to make sure future clients don't face the same problems.

Respond to phone messages quickly

- With social media, this is the age of the instant answer. A one-day turnaround for an email or phone call is too slow!
- Try to send a reply quickly, even if it is just to confirm you have received their message and to set expectations for when they can get a proper reply.

Be honest

- Be honest. Clients appreciate it! Listen to your clients and educate them for better understanding. You can engage them more if you let them see the bigger picture and the background of some of your decisions.

What Customer Service Culture sounds like over the phone

Exhibiting good customer service over the phone involves many of the same techniques as when face to face with a client:

- Sit up straight and smile – body language impacts tone and pitch
- Mimic the clients tone and match their pitch and pace
- Repeat and acknowledge what the client is telling you
- Assume there is an existing rapport
- Be mindful and respectful of cultural differences, including language proficiencies (and use interpreters when needed)



She called having never had to call a service before, she'd already spoken to a lot of people but wasn't sure who exactly had called her back. A lot of it was just calling her back to check in. She wasn't really expecting it but appreciated it. I could tell that she was thankful for the help.

