

**NEW
Workshop
Explores
Customer
Care**



Customer Service SuperH.E.R.O.S. Hear Everything, Reiterate, Offer Solutions

Each and every day you come face to face with all types of customers – some are happy, even thrilled about your programs or facilities. Others land at your counter disgruntled, irritated, frustrated or downright, furious.

“Customer service is a critical, yet often overlooked, component of an agency’s overall success.” explains Jodi Rudick, owner of the Advisors Marketing Group, a firm specializing in park and recreation marketing communications. “Even the most beautiful parks, creative programs, innovative events and award-winning facilities need the assistance of strong front-line service and behind-the-scenes support.”

Customer care is tricky business,” admits Rudick, “because human behavior is so complex and inconsistent.” No two people are the same -- they range from shy and reserved to loud and abrasive. But, no matter what their personality, as public park and recreation professionals, you have the responsibility and challenge of serving the ever-growing, every-changing needs of both internal and external customers. “To make matters worse,” says Rudick, “park and recreation professionals at every level are expected to simultaneously juggle multiple requests from colleagues, cues, callers and clients.

So, what’s a person to do?

“Become Service SuperHEROS!” says Rudick who will present a two-part, Customer Service, Teambuilding and Communications workshop on March 28 at the [Lawrence Community Center] in [Lawrence, Kansas].

“The workshop, co-sponsored by [KRPA], will feature high-energy, interactive training with one of the leading speakers in the park and recreation profession,” says [Jo Ellis], Workshop Coordinator. “The morning session will specifically focus on Customer Care while the afternoon session will investigate teambuilding and multi-generational communications.”

Among the wide variety of information to be covered, Rudick will help participants learn how to

- Assess and evaluate their SuperHEROS status

- How to avoid “Killer Phrases of Customer Care.”
- Build a proactive Customer Service Strategy
- Recognize and manage the four types of “Villainous Customers”
- Use the super simple, three-step HEROS approach to help deal with difficult customers.

“H.E.R.O.S.,” explains Rudick, stands for “Hear Everything, Reiterate, and Offer Solutions. Briefly, the steps can be explained as follows:

1. Hear Everything – Often a routine customer encounter becomes elevated because a customer feels ignored, misunderstood or has been forced to wait. “These confrontations could be avoided or diffused by listening rather than talking,” says Rudick. “As a rule of thumb acknowledge and apologize for delays and mix-ups, rather than deflect and debate,” says Rudick. Listen to everything the customer says, allow them to vent and watch for hidden non verbal messages.
2. Reiterate – Once the customer has been heard, it’s important to clarify the key issue. Recap the key concerns and restate the overall issue. Stick to the facts, but sympathize with emotions.
3. Offer Solutions – Remember that in many cases, the problem is already solved, since many customers simply want to be acknowledged and validated. However, true SuperHEROS know that innovative solutions and fantastic follow-up, can actually transform disgruntled patrons into delighted devotees. Of course some “complaints” are indicative of larger issues and should be handled consistently and professionally by tackling the following questions:
 - What will you do as a result of the customer “feedback?”
 - How will you fill the customer’s unmet need?”
 - How will you share the complaint with others?
 - How will you make amends?
 - How will you insure that the problem doesn’t happen again?
 - How will you follow-up with the customers?

Nature vs. Nurture - Rudick also believes that some people are born with the natural ability to deal with customers. A great customer service professional may possess certain innate personality traits such as patience, empathy and compassion. Other characteristics, such as respect, self-confidence, and verbal communication skills can be easily acquired with practice and training. Regardless of your customer service aptitude, Rudick says to keep the following “Fantastic Four” in mind:

1. **Understand your *own* strengths and weaknesses.** Know what types of behavior ‘push your buttons, drive you crazy or elevate your emotions. “Not everyone is cut out for the demands of face-to-face customer care,” admits Rudick. “Others are great on the phone, but don’t have the intricate organizational skills necessary to handle hundreds of emails or

registration requests. Capitalize on your natural talents, while practicing additional skills.

2. **Everyone has a Story** - Remember that every person you deal with – at the front desk, via email, on the phone, at your community center, at the concession stand, in staff meetings, at your dinner table, -- everyone – has a unique set of experiences that guides their behavior. While it's not always easy, don't take negative customer attitude or actions personally.
3. **Expect conflict.** Complaints, suggestions, ideas, questions and problems are all part of the customer communication process. Customer complaints can help you improve your programs, systems, communication and processes. Learn to appreciate customer feedback, no matter what form it takes. Remember, that a customer who complains, is much more valuable to you than a disgruntled customer who says nothing to you, but tells friends, neighbors, co-workers, and everyone they know how unhappy they are with your department.
4. **Practice! Practice! Practice!** Great front line staff learn from their own mistakes and successes as well as by sharing with others. Invest in your customers, your agency and your future by sending staff –seasonal and permanent, full and part-time, paid and 'unpaid' to training workshops (like those offered by [KRPA]) where they can learn from others and share concerns. Check out [KRPA online] to learn more about upcoming workshops and training opportunities.



BAM-IT!

CUSTOMER CARE -- DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

By Jodi Rudick, Advisors Marketing Group

As you prepare for a busy spring and summer season with increased enrollments, tournaments, programs, classes, camps and traffic – you no-doubt want to provide the best possible customer service. No matter what your position, working with customers, both internal and external, is an important part of your job. Whether you work with seasoned seniors or tiny toddler; all customers have the same needs – to be acknowledged, heard and respected. Take this Quick Quiz to see how you rate as a Customer Service SuperHERO.

		4	3	2	1	0
		Always	Most of the Time	Some-times	Seldom	Never
1.	I feel good about myself.					
2.	I feel knowledgeable about my job and my agency.					
3.	I talk about the benefits of parks and recreation with customers and co-workers.					
4.	I love working with people.					
5.	I enjoy solving problems.					
6.	I work well under pressure.					
7.	I can easily juggle many projects at once.					
8.	I handle interruptions with ease.					
9.	I adapt easily to new situations					
10.	I believe that the customer is the most important person in my agency					
11.	I feel empowered to handle customer problems on my own.					
12.	I take criticism well.					
13.	When talking on the telephone, I smile and am enthusiastic.					
14.	I feel committed to my job and my agency.					
15.	I greet people when they enter my facility/office/area/etc.					
16.	When I don't know the answer to a customer questions, I quickly find the answer and follow-up the customer.					
17.	My work area is neat and organized.					
18.	I take pride in my appearance and know that I represent my agency.					
19.	I follow-up with customers after they have complained.					
20.	I speak highly of my agency.					
21.	I speak highly of my co-workers, supervisors, managers and decision-makers.					
Total Each Column						

CUSTOMER CARE

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

SELF TEST SCORES

Add up the number of answers in each column. Give yourself
4 points for each “Always.”
3 points for each “Most of the Time.”
2 points for each “Sometimes.”
1 point for each “Seldom.”
Sorry, you don’t get any points for “Nevers.”

75 - 84	Congratulations! You are a CUSTOMER SERVICE SUPERHERO. Your attitude is contagious. Share your enthusiasm with others.
51-74	Good job! You have all the right stuff to deliver AMAZING CUSTOMER SERVICE. Consistency is the key to reaching SUPERSTARDOM.
36-50	You’re on your way. Take a deep breath and focus on the customers needs. Work with your supervisor to make sure you are getting the necessary support to skillfully communicate with customers.
22-35	While you may not love working with people, it is a necessary part of every job. Take small steps to improve your attitude by constructively discussing issues with supervisors and co-workers.
0 – 21	Yikes! You are in definite need of some training, mentoring and attitude adjustment. Seek out ways you can support your agency doing behind the scenes work and make a conscious choice to focus on the positive aspects of your customers and co-workers

Resource: BAM! Benefits Activated Marketing by Jodi Rudick. To learn more about the BAM! Manual email jodi@advisorsmarketing.com

Whatever your score, don’t miss [KRPA’s] upcoming workshop, Mission is Possible – How to Become a Customer Service SuperHERO on [March 28 at Lawrence Community Center.] Space is limited.