



## Become Your Own Customer

The best way to understand how your company is providing service is to become your own customer. Not just once – make this a routine! You may be able to identify barriers to service, knowledge gaps or issues with technology. The best part is... you may be able to fix the problem before it turns your customers away. Here are a few suggestions...

### **Add your name to all company mailing lists.**

Things to look for include...

- Content and choice of words in communication pieces;
- Ease of finding company contact information;
- Overall look – is the piece coming damaged from the post office?
- Mailing labels – are they professionally created or written by hand?
- Volume – is your company trying to maximize mail outs by providing information overload?

### **Send an Email**

Things to look for include...

- How quick is the response?
- Was your need appropriately addressed? This is especially important if your company is using technology that automates the email response.
- Are there any spelling errors?
- Is the communication clear and professional?
- Is the response laid out in a way that is easy to read? I.e., bullet points versus long paragraphs?
- Were you appropriately thanked for your inquiry?

Read all written materials through a customers' eyes. Better yet, use someone on the "outside". Does the tone and choice of words invite the customer to return to do further business or turn them away. Words such as "no", "must", "have to" and "policy" create barriers – ask yourself if your objective is to communicate WITH the customer or TO the customer.

## **Phone your Call (Contact) Centre.**

Things to look for include...

- How long do you “wait in line” for a representative? Would your customers have the patience to wait?
- Do you ever receive “dead air”?
- Do you ever receive a busy signal?
- When you reach a live representative, how do they answer the call? Do they use active listening skills, effective and clear communication and are able to answer your call without transferring you?

If your company uses automated service options...

- Are options easy to understand and select? (or have you used jargon that only a well-trained employee can understand?)
- Can you reach a live representative quickly if required?
- Are you asked to enter information that will only be asked again when you receive a live representative?
- Are the number of selections kept to a minimum?
- If you are using speech recognition – does the system effectively recognize what you are looking for or do you need to repeat yourself?
- Are you ever sending your customers into a cycle of options they cannot get out of?

## **Phone everyone in your company.**

Things to look for include...

- How often do you receive voice mail versus a human?
- Do employees provide easy options for service on their voice mail – including a human option?
- Do voice mail recordings sound inviting, provide the date and ask the customer to leave a message indicating what time frame they can expect a response? (or do you receive the all too familiar “thank you for calling... I am either on the phone or away from my desk... please leave a message at the sound of the tone...”)
- How do employees answer their phones? The company should be identified, the employee first name provided and the tone inviting! “Thank you for calling, how may I help you?”