

# Customer Service Culture

Empowering employees to give customers top-notch service

By Kelcey Thompson

**W**hat is customer service? What does it look like? What is *good* customer service? How does it make you feel? What is *outstanding* customer service? What would it take to wow you? Do you have the power to wow your customers?

These are questions that we are asking employees all over the world. The responses range from nothing short of amazing to standard fodder. Employees who have been trained and feel empowered are quick to respond, confident in their answers, whereas employees who have been told repeatedly by their managers to “just” make the customer happy are not sure what they are supposed to say.

The questions are not meant to be tricky; they are simple inquiries about an individual’s perceptions. When we say “individuals,” we mean everyone. Here at Applied Management Group Inc. (AMG), we take it one step further than asking just the employees—we work with everyone in the business, from owners and managers to customer-facing employees and everyone in between. We believe it is critical to get everyone’s point of view, because we have found that:

- When employees are empowered, the answers are the same from both management and staff—it is company policy, so it is repeatable, trainable and trackable, creating a performance culture; and
- When the answers and perceptions are different—at companies where nothing is written down and it is all based off of hearsay—we know we are dealing with a tribal culture.

## Generating Positivity

In the intensely competitive world of business, companies must empower and train their employees to look for the service component in everything they do. One study determined that the average return from service activity for makers of consumer goods is 100%—in other words, if you spend \$1 million on a service program and empowering personnel, you would receive \$2 million in bottom-line benefits. For banks, the return was even higher, coming in



at 170%; for retail it can be as high as 200%.

Customers are in the process of turning the corner from being complacent about whether they receive any form of acceptable customer service to demanding a seamless process. People are sick of being treated like they do not matter—they have voices and they are not afraid to use them. Why not turn those voices around and make them positive—turn those voices into raving fans.

### Creative Customer Service

As with anything in a business, it all starts at the top. As a business owner or manager, you must have a clear picture of what outstanding customer service means within your business. Remembering that your business and employees are unique, taking the time to create a performance culture within your business allows you take control of your level of customer service and how it is perceived and executed by your employees. Service is the liveliness and strength of a company.

So how do you, as an owner or manager, create that vision? It requires some creativity. Do not focus only on the customer service that your business provides—think about any outstanding customer service you have received that left you with a feeling of “wow.” Think about where that feeling came from and why you cannot get that everywhere you go. Think about the kind of customer service that not only makes you *want* to go back, but makes you *actually* go back. Creating that kind of outstanding customer service within your business is how you wow your customers.

Now that you have a clear vision of the customer service you want to provide, create that vision within your business. Provide the necessary tools to all of your employees—not only technological tools, but also training that allows them to participate and take ownership of your vision.

When asking the questions at the beginning of this article, AMG has found that employees want to be part of the vision and to be heard. If you only learn one thing from this article, let it be that. For many people, there is no greater feeling than being part of a team, and knowing that what they do matters and affects the whole team. No one wants to be the last one picked on the playground.

In businesses with outstanding customer service, the business works *with* and *for* the

employees. This is a powerful statement—the business from the top down creates an empowered environment. This business model may look upside down to some business owners.

Aim high, empower your employees, wow your customers and be on the cutting edge that devours your market.

To learn more, join us on Wednesday, March 30, at 2 p.m. EDT for the first in a series of three webinars on empowering personnel. **WQP**

*Kelcey Thompson is vice president of Applied Management Group Inc. Thompson can be reached at [kthompson@appliedmg.com](mailto:kthompson@appliedmg.com) or 262.697.4470.*

## PURE STYLE, PURE QUALITY

### PURE TOMLINSON



Tomlinson's RO faucets are available in five exquisite designs to bring high style to the high-end kitchen. With ten eye-catching finishes to match virtually any kitchen décor and their superior lead-free construction, these RO faucets prove that pure style and pure quality are pure Tomlinson.



**tomlinson®**

WORLD CLASS, WORLDWIDE  
216-587-3400 • [www.tomlinsonind.com](http://www.tomlinsonind.com)

Write in 760