

CREATING A CUSTOMER SERVICE CULTURE

FIVE STEPS TOWARD CREATING A CUSTOMER SERVICE CULTURE

Here are five steps to take to establish and sustain a customer service culture:

1. Define your purpose in a sentence or two.
2. Set down a short list of principles that are fundamental to your desired culture.
3. Express your cultural expectations at every possible junction, from recruitment onward.
4. Introduce and diligently maintain a repeating ritual for cultural reinforcement.
5. Develop an obsession with talent management.

ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL DEFINITIONS OF PURPOSE THAT I KNOW OF IS THE ONE THAT GUIDES MAYO CLINIC:

THE NEEDS OF THE PATIENT COME FIRST.

MAYO CLINIC'S STATEMENT IS EXCEPTIONALLY BRIEF (SEVEN WORDS), USES LANGUAGE THAT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND (THE ONLY WORD LONGER THAN ONE SYLLABLE IS THE CENTRAL WORD, "PATIENT") AND IS CLEAR IN THE EXPECTATIONS IT LAYS OUT FOR EVERYONE WHO WORKS THERE.

1. Define your purpose in a sentence or two. Write down the purpose of your business, and describe the type of behaviors you'll be expecting from every associate, manager and executive in your organization. This statement of purpose should be written in clear language, short enough to be memorable and long enough to be meaningful.

2. Set down a short list of principles that are fundamental to your desired culture. These should represent a sort of Constitution or Bill of Rights for what your culture will be. I suggest that you limit yourself to no more than 10 or 12 essential principles. Here are a few examples:

- We value every individual's input and creativity.
- We respond both to the stated requests of our customers and to opportunities to serve them in ways they may not directly request.
- Service is the responsibility of everyone here.

3. Express your cultural expectations at every possible juncture, from recruitment onward.

When you're hiring, let potential employees know, *from the first moment they come in contact with your organization, what matters most in the culture you are striving to create.* Then continue to convey these expectations while onboarding employees and thereafter. Take a moment below to write down a few key employee touchpoints where you would be able to communicate and reiterate your cultural expectations:

4. Introduce and diligently maintain a repeating ritual for cultural reinforcement. Setting up the framework for a great service culture is only the start. *Reinforcing* it is what ultimately makes the difference. Your best hope for having your service culture persist over time is to find an opportunity to reinforce your cultural focus every single day. While not exactly a ritual, it can be extremely valuable to develop an abbreviated version of the principles you've developed in step 2 and typeset them onto an accordion-fold business-card-size piece of collateral. This is phenomenally effective at, quite literally, keeping everyone on the same page. And its roots are legendary; the founders of the modern-day Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company introduced such a "credo card" Think about what such a "credo card" could look like for your business, and what information from Questions 1 and 2 you would write on it. Add your notes to the lines below, and then find a way to bring it to life and distribute it to your employees so they have something to refer to every single day.

5. Develop an obsession with talent management. "Talent management" is the term I use for the recruitment, selection and development of employees. As much as anywhere, this is where culture lives or dies. It's essential that you implement a successful approach and mindset for finding, keeping and developing employees who have an affinity for service: employees who are selected for their interest in and suitability for your company purpose and whom you support and guide in their further development. What are some ways you can instill an affinity for service among your current employees? What are some things you will look for in future new-hires? Write your ideas below and refer back to them while managing talent from end-to-end.
