

DEFINING CUSTOMER SERVICE CULTURE

My definition of “customer service culture”—the practical, working definition I use on the jobsite—is as simple as one and two (there’s not even a three). Your customer service culture, for better or worse, has two primary elements:

1. The way your company treats its customers
2. The way your company treats the people whose job it is to take care of these customers: employees as well as vendors and subcontractors

The fundamental complication with this two-part definition is that there may not be an all-the-time way that you treat your customers or an all-the-time way that you treat your employees, vendors and subcontractors. So, to get the full measure of a culture, we’ll need to subdivide items 1 and 2 and look separately at the following:

- How you treat your customers, employees, vendors and subcontractors on a normal, stress-free day (when money is flowing, nobody’s called in sick, and you’ve got your most experienced team working)
- How you treat these entities when you are under stress (when you’re facing tight resources, hurricanes or other freakish weather on the horizon, demanding customers, intensive shareholder demands, difficult personal times for yourselves as employees and leaders, and so forth). In the figure below, the goal is for the treatment in all four boxes to be equally positive.

THE SOLOMON SERVICE CULTURE MATRIX™

HOW WE SERVE OUR CUSTOMERS WHEN STRESS IS LOW	HOW WE SERVE OUR CUSTOMERS WHEN STRESS IS HIGH
HOW WE TREAT OUR EMPLOYEES AND VENDORS WHEN STRESS IS LOW	HOW WE TREAT OUR EMPLOYEES AND VENDORS WHEN STRESS IS HIGH

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THE SOLOMON SERVICE CULTURE MATRIX™

Now it's your turn. Fill out each square in the matrix below, thinking about how your company treats different stakeholders at different times. Are your answers mostly the same? Or are they massively different from one square to the next? Use the results of this exercise as a conversation starter for your leadership team. Ideally, you will be able to transform your culture such that each square of the matrix says the same thing.

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WEEK SIX