

Great Service Matters

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- Great Service Matters is the newsletter that focuses on improving enrollment, retention and success through all facets of customer service and selling in and for academia and businesses that work with higher education.

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Customer Service Improves the Classroom Increases Student Willingness to Engage, Listen and Learn

Though some faculty deride customer service (CS) as a noxious import from business, it has been found that faculty who provide increased levels of CS will have a better and more satisfying teaching experience. And the students will learn better with greater desire, compliance and increased retention.

When students believe a faculty member provides them good service and cares about them, they are more willing to listen and learn. Students are also more compliant with the teacher's instruction, more willing to engage in-class and complete assignments.

This contention is supported not simply by the results reported from colleges that have engaged faculty in customer service training but can be gleaned from two recent studies: the 2005 NSSE and another by Hombury, Koschate and Hoyer in the April 2005 issue of the *Journal of Marketing* along-side consideration of interactional equity theory.

Students seek a level of interactional equity and EROI (Emotional ROI) to assure their engagement in a classroom. Students want to feel that they will receive back at least as much as they put in and



especially that the faculty provide enough CS to show they care about them as individuals. If students perceive a level of service equity in the way they and the faculty interrelate such as "give a name/get a name" (a basic CS tactic) there is a corresponding willingness to learn (WTL). Students follow professors' assignments, rules and lectures more fully. i.e. they engage. Faculty will have students who are more involved in class, compliant with their instructions and requirements, and engaged.

Increased customer service also yields greater faculty fulfillment and enjoyment in the classroom. Certainly a much sought for prize. There is a direct correlation between CS and the resulting student/faculty engagement and WTL. This correlation also controls instructional satisfaction for faculty and leads directly into improvements in morale and appreciation of both students and the institution itself. And it can be accomplished with just

Customer Service Helps Teachers Teach and Students Learn

Enrollment is Arithmetic: Retention Geometric

Good customer service increases enrollment and retention arithmetically while bad customer relations decreases both enrollment and retention geometrically. This inevitably leads to catastrophic events.

Colleges gain enrollment one student and then one more and then one more. We retain them the same way, one by one. Students stay if they are individually pleased with the treatment they receive and their learning. The decision is an individual one made by each student.

But, colleges lose students in a geometric progression. An angry, upset student tells another student, and another, and another tells a friend, family member, and they repeat it to others whenever the college is mentioned. What was an upset student multiplies and the image of the college is hurt.

And what do students complain about? The way

they are treated. Insensitive staff, uncaring administrators, long lines, getting the run around, poor communication, bad information, lack of assistance, inadequate student space, parking, uncaring faculty. You know [the list](#).

Malthus recognized the destructive force of weather as a major negative effect on population. In colleges, he would have investigated bad customer service.

We know weather can create major disasters if we are not prepared for them. We all want to know what the storm will be like so we can be ready. We work hard to be aware of bad weather knowing full well that we have no control over it. We want to know even though there is nothing we can do to stop a hurricane, tornado, high winds, flooding, snow.

Yet, when it comes to [customer service](#), a major cause of enrollment and retention disaster, most colleges really don't know where the ill winds are coming from. Or for

(continued on page 3)

Recognize Staff to Increase Morale and Retention

By Neal Raisman, Ph.D., President, *AcademicMAPS*

Orwell's proposition ten with Snowball's amendment. "All animals are created equal – but some are more equal than others" is alive and well today. Maybe at your campus too!

As a customer service consultant, I have found the following to be rules of behavior at most every college and university.

The people who

- do the most work get the least amount of training.
- get the lowest pay and greatest responsibility
- need the most resources to do their work will get the least and the least adequate, often oldest, equipment.
- are key to the institution's success but get the least recognition for their work and
- are the ones who also receive the smallest amount of concern for their happiness.

They also have a primary responsibility for customer service, enrollment and retention.

We are talking about the staff. The people who come to the college every day, greet and meet students, take care of their primary needs from registration and billing to eating and sleeping. The people who solve or cause student happiness and/or distress. The people who can make or break an institution's enrollment and retention numbers. The people whose love or hate of their jobs will make your job a delight or living hell.

Staff at colleges are in a arduous role. They are among the hardest working people at the college and, except for adjunct faculty, the lowest paid. Faculty have numerous rights, privileges and perks that should make them feel valued, but too often make too many them act imperious to the staff. Faculty and some administrators can see the college and the staff as if they were there for them. Since so many administrators come from the faculty, they too often have not learned how to work well with staff.

And yet, the staff are most often overlooked or simply taken for granted at colleges and universities. Granted, it may be true that the faculty are "the heart of the college" as I have been told many times. But without the arms, legs and vital organs of the staff, the heart is a dead, lifeless piece of ofal.

Overworked, underpaid and unrecognized

Staff have always been those who do the work to make others' lives easier. They are the front line service providers to students as well. They are also the ones who keep the institution moving. Try a couple days without them and see what happens. Not a pretty sight.

They end up doing the same essential work day after day for which they gain little status or real recognition. That can easily become tedious and unrewarding.

A depressed staff leads inevitably to weak, apathetic, even poor customer service. Yet, most colleges do little to either formally or informally recognize and show staff members that they are valued as individuals and professionals. Certainly some colleges have a

program to "recognize" a staff member or two for contributions over many years. Maybe a special parking space for a week or a plaque at pre-graduation ceremonies. but these do not address the day to day feelings of inequality in recognition, perks and pay that lead to staff malaise.

Customer service audits I have done for colleges found that a great many customer service issues have their roots in staff malaise. People who feel unappreciated, over worked and on the periphery of an organization do not feel a part of it. It has been found that staff do feel frustrated, unrecognized and discouraged that their hard work goes unacknowledged while others who they feel do far less, claim the glory and recognition.

Colleges need to establish a partner relationship with staff, their **significant internal customers**. One of the critical aspects of establishing a partnership relationship is including everyone on the team in the flow of information. In academia this is extremely important since the coin of the realm is information. Generally, staff are not included in the information flow and are thus left outside of the partnership. They are not seen in their singularly important role with students. In most every case, staff members who answer telephones, greet people at desks, man the registration and bursars windows, etc. are the real point of contact between student and college. Yet, they are so often the last to know about changes in college policies, curricula, and other information that affects their interactions with students.

Okay, how to get staff in the loop.

Start with involving them on college committees – and not as secretaries. Staff often know the college better than anyone else. Their work touches every aspect, every form, and every policy, just about everything at the college. They have a massive amount of real information and advice to bring to the table. For example, at one college, it was taking so long to register a student that many were simply walking out the door. When I called higher level administrators together, they suggested they would study it and get back. In other words, they did not have an answer.

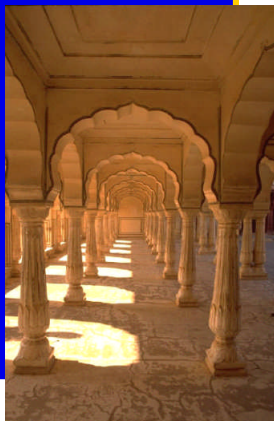
So I assembled a group of staff people who worked in the enrollment/registration process. Within an hour we had identified poorly written and redundant forms and activities, forms and instructions, unnecessary information being requested, poor staff assignment practices that slowed things down and conflicting rules and directives. We had also decided what we needed to keep, what could go and rewrote directions. The time and frustration of the registration process was cut by 34% starting the next day. Staff began to feel as if they really were a part of the college with something to contribute. Customer service also improved overnight.

Simple lesson. Staff are people with value and ability. They need to be recognized for what they do – and do well.



Low morale yields
lines & loses students

Orwell's
proposition ten "All
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Great Service Yields Increased Tuition Acceptance and Better Cash Flow

Students and families do not like tuition increases but if a college provides good customer service, the increases will be accepted much better. And with fewer complaints. Moreover, good customer service leads to increased on time payments increasing cash flow.

Finkelman (Marketing Management, 1993) Homburg, Koschate and Hoyer (J of Marketing, 5/05) found that when customers (students) feel they are getting good to excellent service, WTP (willingness to pay) increases.. So if customers/students feel they are not receiving good service, they will resist tuition increases.

The level of satisfaction is cumulative and includes all their experiences from classroom through administrative and certainly facilities. Each experience can be felt as equal so indifferent financial aid help or

books not available at the store or even dirty bathrooms can yield a basic "this college sucks". If students feel that way, as they will from weak CS, they will resist increases. But if they are satisfied, they will be willing to



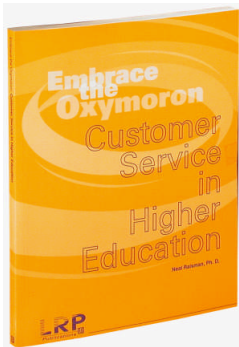
accept them. Gruca and Rego (Journal of Marketing, 7/05) found that customer satisfaction would have a direct positive effect on cash flow and shareholder value. In the case of colleges, shareholder value would be the stability of its finances and appreciation of its value. It

would also thus lead to increased employee satisfaction and morale which could influence CS throughout the institution. Their research indicated that on-time WTP increases proportionately with overall satisfaction. These also feed back into acceptance of increased tuition which would have a positive effect on budget. Using their projections, increased CS would lead to a .001% increase in on-time payment thus having a direct effect on cash flow. Moreover, if cash flow increases, it would have to lead to a corresponding positive effect on bad debt and reduced collection costs.

For further detail on CS, cash flow and tuition increases, contact us. Info@GreatServiceMatters.com

Embrace the Oxymoron Purchased by 43% of IHE's

Since publication in in 2002, Embrace the Oxymoron: Customer Service in Higher Education (LRP Publications) has been a bestseller in colleges and universities. The book by Dr. Neal Raisman discusses how customer service is one of the most significant factors in enrollment, retention, morale and donations. It has been purchased by 43% of colleges and universities in the US with some foreign sales. It also led to demand for a follow-up book focused specifically on Customer Service and enrollment management.



Raisman uses his 34 years in public, private, not-for-profit and proprietary experience as well as extensive research to understand and develop customer service concepts to the world, culture and politics of academia. One issue he makes clear is that business ideas will not always work on campus. For example, he goes so far as to state that the customer is not always right in his Principles of Good Customer Service (available free to readers of GSM upon request)

Raisman also provides solutions to problems that work in academia so colleges can start increasing success immediately

The book is written in a style that can be understood by any member of a college or university. He knows the culture, traditions and mores of academia, talks our language and knows our people so his discussions and solutions hit home.

Raisman uses his real world experience as a consultant to colleges and universities in the US and Europe to disclose and explain issues from first contact through graduation pledge cards to even what pleases or "ticks off" students. Then he provides solutions to correct problems like clerks too mean to be hired at the DMV, processes and lines that anger students, facilities that scare , the "butt brush" effect and many others customer service and marketing issues that can lose 12% of potential students *once they make contact with the school*. And his solutions are ones that work and find acceptance in the sometimes fractious world we live in.

Purchasing info:(LRP www.shoplrp.com/product/p-31075.html)

(Malthus Cont from front page) don't know where the ill winds are coming from. Or for that matter, they are not aware if their customer service will lead to sunshine and warm feelings toward

the college. Do you know whether the customer service provided your student and potential students is helping or hurting you?

You Should

Your students will thank you for it with increased enrollment and retention.

Your staff will thank you with increased morale and service - not only to students but one another and the college



Know others who could benefit from knowing more about customer service? Let us know or have them contact us for a free subscription to Great Service Matters newsletter@GreatServiceMatters.com or 413-219-6939

Campus CS Audits Increase Enrollment and Retention

AcademicMAPS research on 103 college and university campuses found 12% of students reject a college after they make initial actual contact. They are turned off by what they see as unacceptable service levels from a host of issues starting with turgid catalogues, poor signage, unco-operative people, untenable processes, slow lines, a campus set-up to say "we don't care about your time or experience". Other students enroll but weak or poor customer service soon makes them believe the school is not for them. Can you afford to lose students? It may be important for you to consider a Customer Service Field Audit, training, workshops or speaker for your campus, enrollment and budget.

We recommend you audit

- Reception Areas
- Admissions
- Counseling
- Financial Aid
- Registration
- Registrar's
- Cafeteria
- Bookstore

Review these areas as well as every level of customer service such as:

- ✓ *wait time* -how promptly people are recognized and served
- ✓ acknowledgement of student presence and manner of the recognition given
- ✓ welcoming and comfort level generated
- ✓ how courteous your people are
- ✓ how questions are responded to
- ✓ requested information provided promptly and graciously
- ✓ are accurate directions given
- ✓ general demeanor, and attitude toward customers
- ✓ availability of information at point of contact
- ✓ point of contact knowledge of college and/or where to get it if not available
- ✓ accuracy of information
- ✓ use of campus jargon or argot versus standard language
- ✓ language use, attitude, syntax, grammar, tone
- ✓ customer-first attitude
- ✓ *time to completion* required for successful interaction
- ✓ helpfulness and accuracy of writ-

ten materials at points of contact

- ✓ location and availability of media
 - ✓ processes used with customers
 - ✓ orderliness of the interaction and area of interaction
 - ✓ telephone protocols used by customer contacts to aid or detract from service to campus callers
 - ✓ general telephone skills
- Audits also look at the environment provided for students in these areas and offices from layout and space through lighting and clutter as they affect the customer's sense of reflected value and service from entry to the campus through moving through it and finally the exiting experience.

AcademicMAPS studies everything then provides realistic solutions to increase enrollment and retention.

AcademicMAPS has been helping colleges and college-related businesses improve customer service, enrollment, retention and morale since 1999. Its research, workshops, audits, training and other solution services help clients grow and succeed. Its president, Dr. Neal Raisman, is recognized as the leader in collegiate customer service and is sought after as a speaker and consultant.

**The 14 Principles
of Good College
Customer Service**

FREE

**Just Contact us
and we will send as
many 9x12 posters
as you need**

413-219-693

My trustees, the college and I are so delighted we hired AcademicMAPS to do a customer service audit for our colleges.

It's right on target to help us meet enrollment and retention goals. Your analysis will help us become a much stronger college... and make it a first choice for students. With the competition for students out there, we can use every student we can get and keep. The work you did for us will make that so much easier.

You really learned who we are and gave us solutions that work in our culture

Dr. George Michel President

Mid-Plains Area Community College District

**Mention Great
Service Matters
Newsletter and**

**receive a
NO COST**

**Telephone
Consultation**

**on any customer service
question or issue facing**

**your campus
413-219-6939**

AcademicMAPS Has Assisted

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Westchester Community College q University of Louisiana- Monroe q Morrisville State College
Manatee Community College q North Harris Montgomery Community College District q Kingwood College
Montgomery College q Tomball College q North Harris College q Corning Community College q
Landsdowne College q North Georgia Technical College q Piedmont Community College
The Community College of Baltimore County q Catonsville q Dundalk q Essex q Mid-Plains Area Community College District q Platte q McCook q Southeast Community College q Nord Anglia PLC q SUNY Rock...