

VISION FACILITATION NEWS CONFERENCE EDITION

CUSTOMER SERVICE CONFERENCE, A GREAT SUCCESS!

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RESPECT AS BOTH A SOCIAL & CORE CUSTOMER SERVICE VALUE

"The customer who feels respected also feels valued and in turn they, I would hope, will treat others with respect"

Hon. Chris Mole MP for Ipswich

Delegates from organisations including: Rolls-Royce, Lloyds-TSB, British Telecom, Skanska, Balfour Beatty, Cambridge University, Centrica, Birch Estate Agents, AQA and the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) attended Vision Facilitation's Customer Service Perspectives Conference, which took place on 3rd October, 2007, at the beautiful Seckford Hall Hotel in Suffolk.

The conference, was organised to coincide with the Institute of Customer Service's (ICS) Customer Service Week (1st to 5th October 2007).



*(from left to right)
Paul Cooper, ICS, Chris Mole, MP and Michael Debenham, CQI at the Customer Service "Perspectives" Conference*

Paul Cooper, Institute of Customer Service, gave two superb, inspirational presentations covering customer service excellence and the Customer Service Index (CSI).

In striving for service excellence, Paul highlighted the need for an organisation to embrace approaches which ranged from; robust recruitment and training processes, clear and visible leadership, excellent complaints handling and learning, employee well-being, measuring performance, communications and effective (and pertinent) utilisation of IT/tools.

Visit the Institute of Customer Service, web site at: www.instituteofcustomerservice.com

VisionFacilitation, who both sponsored and designed the conference, invited a unique and world class group of speakers, to share their perspectives on delivering customer service excellence. A recurring theme throughout was that of respect and well-being for both customers and employees.

In opening the Conference, Chris Mole, MP, made the connection between Customer Service Values and Social Values and how "good customer service relates to the notion of respect".

Key note speakers included: Paul Cooper, Director of Communications, Institute of Customer Service (ICS), Chris Rowe, Work Related Stress Policy Unit, Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Michael Debenham, Professional Affairs Manager, Chartered Quality Institute, (CQI), Jane Ponder, Town Centre Manager for Brentwood and Dr Mike Cousins, MD, Triaster Limited.



"an excellent conference with excellent speakers" said Kenny Talabi, pictured with Dr Mike Cousins, Triaster Ltd



RAISING CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

Ten Things to Achieve Service Excellence

- Recruit and train the right people
- Keep your staff happy
- Recognise the importance of customer loyalty
- Lead from the top
- Welcome complaints
- Utilise tools with caution
- Tell the world (once you ARE good!)
- Build a Reputation
- Measure your performance
- Communications

CUSTOMER SERVICE & SOCIAL VALUES

In opening the Customer Service “Perspectives” Conference, the Hon. Chris Mole MP, for Ipswich, was keen to emphasise the link between social values and good customer service. The notion that respect, far from being something demanded by some of today’s youth, is, Chris believes, a value that has to be earned, a view he feels is shared by the majority of decent people. Continuing the theme of respect as a core customer service value, Chris added “the customer who feels respected also feels valued and in turn they, I would hope, will treat others with respect”. In highlighting the need for good customer service, in the public sector, Chris stated that “local councils increasingly understand the reputational damage that could come from poor customer care”.

“Public services have come a long way in the last 10 years”, says Chris, and “customer focused processes, backed by new technology” together with “trained staff” means that staff are now properly equipped to “deliver what the customer or citizen wants”. Outlining initiatives, in the region, “that cut to the core of social customer service values”, Chris explained the purpose of Suffolk Police’s “Safer Neighbourhood Teams” programme. The programme embraces 47 Safer Neighbourhood Teams, embedded in the community, which bring together Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers to canvass the community on problems directly affecting their area. Secondly, “Customer Service Direct”, is a joint venture between Suffolk County Council, Mid Suffolk Council and British Telecom, which has “provided a raft of council services all under one roof and is integrated online”.

In closing his speech Chris said of the importance of good Customer Service, both in the private and public sectors “at worst you may win and retain a few more customers, at best you might encourage a gentler better world for us all to live in” after all “politeness costs nothing.”



“Politeness costs nothing”

Chris Mole, MP

THE IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE



“Your customers wont love your for your bad service, your competitors will” states Paul Cooper, ICS and adds that “with an ever growing array of products and services, customers now have a greater sense of importance and power, and have rising expectations and less tolerance of poor service.”

One side effect of the growth in consumer choice, is that of a growing “complaints culture”, says Paul, but this is good news for both the customer and the supplier.” Why? It allows organisations’, who listen to their

customer’s complaints, to address poor service issues and improve (a view embodied in the ISO9001 Quality Standards and shared by the Chartered Quality Institute). “A major feature of a good reputation is good complaint handling” states Paul and additionally “organisations need to be able to see itself through the eyes of its customers and prioritise improvements accordingly”.

But what do customers really want? he asks. “they want efficient service, to be treated as human beings, to be listened to, have accurate information when they need it and for service promises to be kept”. “If you want to grow,” says Paul, “your customers have to become your marketing department”, and the key indicator in many customer service surveys, is rapidly becoming i.e. “how likely is it that your would recommend this organisation to a friend, colleague or relative?”.

“If you want to grow, your customers have to become your marketing department”

Paul Cooper, Institute of Customer Service



The Key Question to Answer

“How likely is it that you would recommend this organisation to a friend, colleague or relative?”

Fred Reichheld, Bain & Co, Harvard Business School 2001-3



Paul Cooper, Communications Director, Institute of Customer Service

MANAGING PEOPLE AND ACHIEVING PERFORMANCE

'Bad' Jobs versus 'Good' Jobs	
<p>'Bad' Jobs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insecure employment • Monotonous / repetitive • Lack of autonomy • Effort reward imbalance • Lack of "voice" • Lack of fairness • Not being valued 	<p>'Good' Jobs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for personal control • Opportunity for skill use / acquisition • Externally generated goals • Variety in job content • Monetary reward • Contact with others • Physical security • Valued social position • Supportive supervision • Career outlook • Equity

Organisation's should be creating healthy workplaces, was the message from Chris Rowe, Programme Manager at the Work Related Stress Policy Unit in the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Chris outlined the case for reducing stress in the workplace. "Each case of stress related ill health leads to an average of 29 working days lost and work related stress ultimately costs the UK economy over £3 billion a year". Highly publicised cases of employee stress has caused negative publicity for the organisation concerned, as well as the enormous impact on the families of those affected.

Significant research has high-lighted six workplace stressors, which now form the basis of the HSE's Management Standards, as follows (summarised):

- Demands:** (ensuring employees can cope with their workloads, work patterns and work environment).
- Control:** (how much say the person has in the way they do their work).
- Support:** (encouragement, support and resources provided by the organisation)
- Relationships:** (promoting positive working to avoid conflict and deal with unacceptable behaviour)
- Role:** (employee understanding of their role and no conflict in role)
- Change:** (how employees are engaged in change and how the organisation manages and communicates change)

The flip side to reducing stress in the workplace and promoting a sense of well-being creates a happier, healthier and more motivated workforce and that surely is good news for the customer.

THE QUALITY PROFESSIONAL IN THE 21ST CENTURY

3: ..Organisations and people
<p>Key competence: People behaviour and development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual values and codes of conduct, • Corporate structure, values and culture • Communication • Managing teams; motivational theory; team building; delegation of authority • Mentoring and training colleagues

In highlighting the "Skill-set of the Quality Professional for the 21st Century", Michael Debenham, Chartered Quality Institute (CQI), said that today's Quality Professional, should be involved in contributing to activities including: formulating Business Strategy, New Product introduction, risk management and integrating management systems (quality, environment, records etc). The organisational environment for the Quality Professional needs to be one of a learning culture. In highlighting the criteria for the learning culture, Michael echoed many of the approaches addressed by the HSE's Management Standards, the importance of valuing its people including customers and supplier. He also adds that those organisations who tap into the huge innovative resource, of employees succeed.

"Simply to rely on measuring customer satisfaction is not enough", says Michael "this is corrective and reactive". "The organisation has to be proactive in its approach to customer relations, which requires a culture that is totally customer focussed and values its people". Michael outlined the specific organisational Quality Professional competences, as follows:

- Understanding who are the customers, purchasers, end-users; market analysis (PEST)
- Understanding current requirements and expectations (QFD) and future needs
- Customer relationship management & feedback systems
- Ability to identify customer-related risks (FMECA)
- Ability to monitor and measure customer satisfaction
- Ability to manage product recall

Today's Quality Professional need to be proficient in the CQI Body of Knowledge, which covers: Concepts of Quality, its History and Development, Customers, Suppliers, other Stakeholders and Markets, Interactions of Organisations and People, Technologies and Techniques, Laws, Standards, Models, Associations and Professional Bodies & Corporate Strategy.

In concluding his presentation, Michael, emphasises "what sets high performing companies apart is the ability to deliver what today's customers want and expect, at the same time as preparing to deliver what they will need tomorrow"



Chris Rowe, HSE, explaining that stress related illness costs the UK economy around £3.7 billion a year. The HSE's 6 Workplace Stress Related Standards have been designed to address key causes of stress in the workplace.

For more information on the HSE and its Workplace Stress Management Standards visit www.hse.gov.uk

"An organisation has to be proactive in its approach to customer relations. This requires an organisational culture that it totally customer focused".

Michael Debenham,
Chartered Quality
Institute



More information on the Chartered Quality Institute, including professional membership can be found at: www.cqi.org.uk

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Vision Facilitation ▶

“ Our vision is
simply to support
you, in achieving
yours ”

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FACILITATOR'S MESSAGE

It was a privilege to have organised and sponsored the Customer Service Perspectives Conference and my thanks to both presenters and delegates, whom took time from their busy schedules to attend. All of the world-class speakers, from their respective professional bodies, espoused a common customer service value, which embraced the need to respect and care, for customers and employees alike.

As a Facilitator and Coach, my own values embrace diversity, equality and respect for others' views. Nowhere is this more apparent than when facilitating a group or team, to achieve a successful outcome, by increasing understanding and tolerance of others' perspectives. So, when Chris Mole, MP, floated the notion of respect as a personal and social value, this resonated with me.

An organisation's approach to customer service training is all too often focused on addressing the superficial, behavioural side of interacting with the customer. Many organisations do not consider what drives behaviour, which are the values and beliefs, formed during our upbringing and influenced by those whom become our role models.

Respect for each other is surely a value that goes to the fabric of our society. When we have respect for others, our positive thoughts and feelings are consistent with our positive attitude and behaviours towards them. To focus on "training" only for the latter, surely just generates those superficial customer service encounters, which we are all too familiar with. It is only when our thoughts and feelings of respect are in harmony with our behaviours, that there is genuine care and compassion, for how we treat the customer and each other.

Sue Banjo, MSc, DipQM, DipSM, CPF, MMICS, MISMA, ACQI, Practitioner NLP Facilitator and Coach

Member of the International Stress Management Association

Member of the Institute of Customer Service

Member and Certified Facilitator of the International Association of Facilitators

Associate Member of the Chartered Quality Institute

- Strategic, Board, Workshop & Project Planning Facilitation
- Customer Service Audits & Process Improvement Projects
- Employee Psychological (Stress Reduction) Well-Being Programmes
- Team Development, Team Building & Org. Dev. Programmes

A BRIGHT BEACON OF CUSTOMER SERVICE IN BRENTWOOD

"Brentwood has lots of excellent shops, restaurants, pubs and businesses" says their exuberant Town Centre Manager, Jane Ponder. "The Retail Managers and staff work very hard to attract and retain customers, especially with competition from larger centres nearby including: Romford, Chelmsford, Lakeside and Bluewater".

"That is why excellent Customer Care is so important to a Town like Brentwood and a Town Centre Manager like me" adds Jane. This is why there was a need for our Customer Care Project. Our survey revealed that the Public believe excellent Customer Care is a must for Brentwood". Our Survey provided excellent qualitative feedback in relation to 65 business and retail outlets in Brentwood and analysis of the responses revealed that the following qualities were repeatedly mentioned, as to what customers valued during their shopping experiences:

- ✓ Friendliness
- ✓ Efficiency
- ✓ Warm welcome
- ✓ Returned calls
- ✓ Cheerfulness
- ✓ Politeness
- ✓ Consistency
- ✓ Pleasantness
- ✓ Attentiveness to needs
- ✓ Help freely offered
- ✓ Remembrance of prior visit
- ✓ Courtesy
- ✓ Knowledge of Product & Service
- ✓ Professional Attitude

This feedback surely underlines the importance of having a

'Yes' Customer Care culture embedded within any organisation, from top to bottom". "You (delegates at the conference) are not Town Centre Manager's, so why is customer service important to you? Because, potentially, the more customer service orientated and the more courteous the sales staff are, then the more footfall will pass your door. The more sales you will ring up.... whatever your business".

"That is why I am going to urge you and your Companies to take a keen interest in the quality of the wider business and shopping environment and wave the customer service flag. The Brentwood Customer Care Project provided very good quality information about Customer's perceptions of Customer Care in individual shops in Brentwood. It was not perhaps as rigorous as some types of market research, undertaken by large multi national Companies. To keep costs down, the survey was done on a shoe string".

"The Customer Survey Project proved popular with retailers and customers alike. I believe that you too, can cultivate the 'Yes' Customer Service Factor quite easily and relatively cheaply within your own organisations. And the bottom line in Brentwood, as in other Town's and Cities elsewhere, you simply can't afford not to".



An enthusiastic Jane Ponder, Brentwood Town Centre Manager, addressing the Customer Service Perspectives Conference