Teaching Our Students How To Be Good Customers

One common complaint among university service providers is that some students are occasionally bad customers. Grievances about students include rudeness, impatience, and generally disrespectful behaviors. As we all know, it is sometimes difficult to deliver great customer service to a bad customer.

It is of great consequence to realize that the way we serve our customers, especially students, can help to shape their future behavior. In other words, we can “teach” our students how to be better customers by the way we deliver customer service to them. The following tips have been suggested:

1. Exemplify good behaviors. People tend to instinctively treat others the way they are treated. Employ good customer service practices to demonstrate to students that they are valued and respected.
   - Always pleasantly greet everyone entering your work or office area.
   - Remain professional, friendly, and patient.
   - Sincerely try to help every student.
   - Be forthcoming with information and anticipate future questions.

2. Establish office rules and be consistent in enforcing them. If your office determines that certain student behaviors are unacceptable when they seek your help (e.g. texting/talking on cell phones, eating, males wearing hats, etc.), make sure that everyone in your office enforces the rules. In some cases it is useful to post the rules so students can observe them upon entry. Any postings should be worded and presented in a customer-friendly way.

3. Correct bad student behavior in a non-threatening way. Gently correct offending students by saying something like, “I'll be happy to help you as soon as you (whatever you want them to do or stop doing).” Do not get loud or seek to embarrass students. If the offense is rudeness, “kill them with kindness.” Remember that you, as the trained adult professional service provider, are in control of the interaction.

4. Reinforce and reward good customer behavior. When you have finished serving a student, always thank him or her and ask if there is anything else you can do to help. Reinforce positive behavior by using positive phrases like, “Thank you for your patience,” “Thank you for having such a great attitude,” “Thank you for being so pleasant,” or “I’m sorry you had to wait so long.”

Sources: Dr. Neal Raisman of academicmaps.com, Shaping Behavior
COMING NEXT WEEK: Always Try to Deliver Good News

Click here for all Customer Service Tips (printable)

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Sources: Dr. Neal Raisman of academicmaps.com, Shaping Behavior from WikEd.