Customer Service vs. Customer Satisfaction

Customer service and customer satisfaction are related, but are not the same thing.

Customer service represents our inputs; what we actually do in serving our clients or customers.

Customer satisfaction is our customers’ perceived outcome; or how well the service experience measured up to their expectations.

Great customer service should lead to high customer satisfaction, but it’s not always that simple. Here are two scenarios from a retail interaction:

Scenario 1:
You walk into a photo store telling the clerk you would like to process last year’s Christmas photos. You ask the attendant how long it will take, and after looking at the stack of other orders waiting to be processed, he tells you they should be ready in three days.

You come back in three days, and he is not quite finished. After an apology to you, he asks you to return the next day, promising that your pictures will be ready. You return on day four and, sure enough your pictures are ready. You pay for them and leave.

Scenario 2:
You walk into a photo store telling the clerk you would like to process last year’s Christmas photos. You ask the attendant how long it will take, and after looking at the stack of other orders waiting to be processed, he tells you it might take as long as six days. You say, “Six days? That’s a long time!” He explains that they are really backed up right now with a specialty order of photos from an event in town, and apologizes, but adds that he will call you if they are done earlier, asking if that is OK with you. You figure that you have waited this long, so what is another few days…

After five days, you get a call from the photo store informing you that the pictures are done. You drive over and pick them up and pay for them.

With which scenario would you be most satisfied?

Most people choose Scenario 2 - even though you got your photos a day later than in Scenario 1. You were initially happier in Scenario 1, but in the end you were disappointed and inconvenienced. After being initially frustrated in Scenario 2, you ended up being pleasantly surprised. What a great feeling!
The same concept applies here at SC State as we strive to deliver excellent service to our customers - especially our students. In our zeal to help, we sometimes over-promise with optimistic estimates of how long things take, or what outcome to expect. Let’s be pleasant and helpful as we serve our customers, and delight them by delivering more than we promise.


COMING NEXT WEEK: Little Things That Make A Big Difference

Click here for all Customer Service Tips (printable)

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