

Intro to Great Customer Service with Pat Wagner

Customer Service Series: Part One

Intro to Great Customer Service

Arrowhead Library System

With Pat Wagner –patternresearch.com

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www.alslib.info

Pat Wagner
pat@patternresearch.com

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Mission and Values

Arrowhead Library System enhances the value of all types of libraries to their communities by cultivating collaboration, technological innovation, and professional development; and enriches the quality of life by providing direct services for those without a public library and access to electronic resources for all people in northeastern Minnesota.

We believe in

- The worth and appreciation of diverse points of view
- Each individual's right to free and equal access to information and ideas
- The value of individuals, community, and culture
- The importance of innovation in meeting evolving customer needs and expectations

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Key Idea

**Everyone
is a customer!**

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Outcomes

- **Improve customer service with consistency, fair treatment, and access for all.**
- *Determine if staff are making exceptions for friends, family, and otherwise favored customers.*
- **Create a draft of a written set of standards for your library to test and review.**

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Agenda

- **Establishing Service Standards**
- **Service Standards: Pros and Cons**
- **Customer Service Principles**
- **Customer Feedback**

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Principles, values, and codes of behavior

Our community members and library visitors will each experience the library as a place where they are welcomed with courtesy and respect (by which we mean...).

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Principles, values, and codes of behavior

Our collections, services, programming, and staffing reflect the ideals and aspirations of our town (college, school, institution) and supports the better futures of the people we serve (by which we mean...).

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Principles, values, and codes of behavior

**As a workplace, our paid and
volunteer staff treat each other
with the same courtesy and
respect as we do our community
members and visitors
(by which we mean...).**

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Library and department policies

**Start with the desired result:
How will you know
your efforts are successful?
Inputs versus outcomes**

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Customer Satisfaction

- I was treated well.
- I solved my problem.
- I'll return. I'll bring other people
- I'll recommend you to others.
- I'll support you financially.
- I'll support you politically.

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Customer Behavior

- Increased participation at events
- Visitors match greater population.
- Fewer “incidents”, but NOT because so-called problem visitors aren’t welcome
- More spontaneous compliments
- More quality candidates for positions
- Increase in usage figures
- Increase in political and financial support

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Staff Standards

- First responses counts the most.
- Are you happy to see visitors?
- Do you greet them with the same courtesy?
Hello, good-bye, yes, please, thank-you?
- Do you offer same level of service to all?
- Could an observer see/hear differences in how you treat people depending on their status:
What does your behavior reveal?

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Staff Standards

- *Fair*: No privileges for friends, family, VIPs, or library personnel.
- *Consistent positive attitude*:
Moods and feuds are self-indulgent.
- *Competent*: You know your workplace, meaning collections, services, programming.
- *Follow-through*: You complete the job.

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Supervisor and Manager Oversight

**The job of supervisors and managers:
elicit the best via positive reinforcement,
keep employees on track, and provide
course correction as needed, meaning...
*if customer service is lacking, it's a sign
that appropriate supervision is lacking.***

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Standards

**It's easy to establish exceptional
customer service standards
when everyone is treated
with the same
respect and courtesy.**

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Setting Limits

**We set limits as an *institution*,
not based on the tolerance
of *individuals*
for "good" or "bad" behavior.**

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The Upside of Standards

- **Consistent, quality customer experience**
- **Quicker orientation of new employees**
- **Fewer workplace and frontline conflicts:**
Everyone knows the priorities.
- **More of a “team” experience at work**
- **Better application of proven methods**

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The Upside of Standards

- **More attention to customer feedback:**
Evidence-based policies
- **Discourages playing favorites**
- **Abides by legal and ethical guidelines**
- **Employees know protocol for problems.**
- **Written guidelines for part-timers**

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Customer Service: Priorities

What happens when your library takes customer service standards seriously?

- Written customer service standards
- Service standards shape hiring goals.
- Featured in orientation and training
- Criteria for employee evaluations
- Shapes services, programming, collections

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The Downside of Standards

- Loss of autonomy
- Can feel like micromanagement
- New standards can generate resentment from longtime employees.
 - *"Gossip? I'm talking about my sister!"*
 - *"Can't say no to the sheriff..."*
 - *"No one ever complained before!"*
- More paperwork to report exceptions

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The Downside of Standards

- Difficult to overcome bad experiences with longtime customers
- Interactions can sound robotic.
- Less about personal judgment
- Less about customized service
- Requires oversight to prevent "drift"
- Requires more training

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Caveat

***Standards don't count
if your library is not
willing to enforce
them uniformly.***

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Agenda

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Exercise

**As a consumer, you're an expert
on customer service.**

1. Share great customer service stories.
2. What principles do they share?

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Customer Services Principles

- Empathy
- Accountable
- Kindness
- Energy
- Curiosity
- Compassion
- Generosity
- Expertise
- Initiative
- Listening
- Conscientious
- Follow-thru
- Civility
- Sensitivity
- Focus
- Smiling
- Awareness
- Fairness
- Integrity
- Polite
- Honest
- Ethical
- Knowledgeable
- Time-sensitive
- Patience
- Anticipates
- Calm
- Good-humored
- Welcoming
- Positive

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Convenience : Easy to...

- Know and understand the rules?
- Apply for a library card or sign up for services?
- Find the library (newcomers)?
- Park and/or close to public transportation?
- Find what they need on their own or find help?
- Custom order (ILL) materials?
- Check out and renew materials?
- Use from home or work, by phone or device?

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Mistakes

- Confusing
- Tedious
- Annoying
- Self-indulgent
- Fussy
- Designed for librarians, not civilians

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Caveat

**Do different people have
different experiences when
they visit your library,
based on how they look
and/or how they talk?**

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Case Study: Invisible Customers

"Seniors don't come to the library."

**Just because you don't see them
at *your* library, doesn't mean
they don't visit *other* libraries.**

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Case Study: Old Friends

*"I know all of our customers
by their first names!
And they love our library!"*

**And what about the folks
who never visit your library?**

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Case Study: We are fine!

*"A majority of our citizens actively
use our library branches."*

**You cleaned up your database and
learned the number of active
cardholders was less than half
of what you were telling folks. Oops.**

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Lesson: Look Beyond Your Walls

Demographic information:

Review existing data for the communities
and institutions your library serves

Surveys: Interviews and focus groups

Allied organizations: What do other agencies,
organizations, and businesses know?

Leave the building:

Meet your potential users on their own turf.

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Case Study: Unpleasant Truths

*"Those people are apathetic."
"Those people don't care about us."
"We have nothing for those people."*

**There exists library personnel
who treat people who they consider
their social equals one way...and
other people a different way.**

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Lesson: Take Complaints Seriously

**You won't learn how personnel
are treating library customers
or their co-workers based only
on how they treat you and
other "peers" and "bosses".**

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Next Steps

**Where is your library today
regarding customer service
standards?**

Where do you want it to be?

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