

Give 'em the
PICKLE!TM



Leader's Guide

Introduction

“Customer Service.” These days, everyone is familiar with the term. Phrases such as “we put the customer first” or “the customer is always right” adorn the walls and desks of businesses everywhere. But there’s more to customer service than hanging a poster or talking about it. The country’s most successful businesses have learned that

customer service *is* their business. So your decision to take your team through customer service training puts you in good company.

Serving the customer is a noble profession. But how do you get your team to understand that what they do is more than just a job? It is an opportunity to connect with people, to brighten a day, to possibly make a difference with the people who buy your service or product. That personal connection could be literally face-to-face with a customer or it could be the personal touch and pride associated with something that will eventually wind up in front of the customer. It's that customer connection that drives your business. It's that customer connection that makes it a noble profession. But how do you communicate that to your team?

This video-based program is a good starting point, but it requires that you:

- ❑ ***Continually talk about customer service.***
- ❑ ***Lead by example so that your actions exemplify your words.***

This training program will help you inspire your team and act as a guide as you and your employees commit to raise the level of service offered to your customers. With humor and anecdotal stories, restaurateur Bob Farrell illustrates how easy it is to treat each customer like “the boss” by giving them what they want.

About Bob Farrell

For more than 30 years, Bob Farrell excelled in an industry with an 80 percent failure rate. Without a single failure, Bob Farrell and his partners opened more than 150 restaurants, including 133 Farrell's Ice Cream Parlors. In this video, Bob Farrell shares stories and lessons he's learned from working in the selling and hospitality industries. Based on the fundamental truth that “*you are in business to take care of the customer,*” his message has meaning for all types of businesses.

In this video, as well as his book *Give 'Em the Pickle*, Farrell talks about the secret to a successful business – which is doing those special or extra things, “pickles,” to make customers happy. He also outlines the four principles that will help ensure your customers keep coming back. They are: ***Service, Attitude, Consistency, Teamwork***

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Section 1- Getting Started

About This Program...

Perhaps you've already talked with your employees about the importance of customer service and now you want to translate the words into actions. Or maybe you've just realized that without an emphasis on customer service, your company's success is limited. What's important is that you've decided to try to change how your employees view their customers and their job.

"GIVE 'EM THE PICKLE!"

The foundation of this training program is the video entitled "Give 'Em the Pickle!" Customers today expect good service. If service is poor, they often don't say much to you, they just don't return. If service is great, not only do they remember it, they come back, again and again and again. So how do you offer great customer service? You offer great customer service by exceeding the customer's expectations through adding your special touch. Whether it's responding to a particular need the customer may have, adding a little extra in the service you offer or simply taking a personal interest in them, these are some of the ways you give away pickles. When you give away pickles, you make those customers feel cared for. Special. As though their business is important to you.

THE KEY PRINCIPLES

The idea of giving away pickles gives you a starting point with your team. It's a tangible, fun concept. Coupled with the four key principles outlined in the video, you have a powerful approach to improving service. The four key principles are:

- ❑ **Service:** Make serving others your number-one priority. Great customer service happens when you exceed customers' expectations by adding your special touch and by having the courage to make things right.
- ❑ **Attitude:** Choose your attitude. How you *think* about the customer is how you will *treat* them. A shining attitude is contagious around customers and shows in the quality of your work.
- ❑ **Consistency:** Customers return because they liked what happened last time. Set high service standards and live them every day.
- ❑ **Teamwork:** Commit to teamwork. Look for ways to make each other look good. In the end, everything everyone does ends up in front of the customer.

Your Role

The best way to prepare for your meeting is to watch the video and read this *Leader's Guide*. Your study of both will help you feel comfortable with the materials. The video and the activities detailed in this guide support the learning; your role is to create an interactive environment in which to promote the learning.

That may seem like a daunting task, but it's actually straightforward, fun, and easy to do. This guide will assist you in presenting the material; the information below will give you ideas for creating an interactive session that is non-threatening.

Tips for Conducting a Successful Meeting

Before we get into the nitty-gritty of the program, let's go through a few basic training tips:

- ❑ **Anticipate objections and challenges.** Think about the hurdles you and your team face in trying to raise the level of service you offer, and be prepared to discuss them. Do your employees feel empowered to take care of the customer? Are the policies in place to treat the customer like the boss? Although this training will help raise awareness, what things can you implement that are realistic? Maybe you start with smiling at every customer and go from there.
- ❑ **Keep the meeting interactive.** Ask a lot of questions. Encourage discussion. Ask for opinions.
- ❑ **Ask questions and wait for an answer.** Silence is your friend! Repeat the question if you need to, but try not to answer it for them. Someone will speak up and offer an answer.
- ❑ **Encourage participation.** Handle answers and participation with encouragement and courtesy. Repeat the answer if it's right and acknowledge that it's correct. If it's not accurate, say, "Not quite" or offer a gentle "No," and then add "Any other ideas?"
- ❑ **Relax and have fun.** Learning is more effective when it is fun. As the leader, it's your responsibility to encourage participation. Passive learning is boring. Nobody likes to be talked at. Ask questions and reward the answers. Be creative! Consider the following ideas:
 - Toss a small giveaway such as stickers, bubble gum or candy to employees when they offer an answer.
 - Put names and ideas up on a flip chart when employees offer a good idea.
 - Have a mid-meeting stretch.
- ❑ **Be yourself.** Just because you're putting on a training hat doesn't mean you need to turn into someone else! Remember, you're all in this together. Your enthusiasm for this training and for improving customer service will be contagious!
- ❑ **Follow up.** Your training meeting is only a start. Consider monthly check-ins to talk about service success stories and to see how everyone is feeling. Tell your employees that you will follow up; then, do so!

Preparing for Your Meeting

Prior to the meeting, post an announcement that outlines the learning objectives and details the time and place. Employees will be better prepared to learn if they know what to expect. If your employees work in different locations, you may want to send the announcements. Write your own or use the form provided in the *Class Aides* section of this guide.

CUSTOMIZING THE PROGRAM DUE TO TIME CONSTRAINTS

The meeting will take you approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours, depending on the size of your group (the more employees you have, the longer the meeting). If you have time constraints, consider the following:

- ❑ **Give pre-work.** Have employees complete the Customer Service Trivia handout, Service Assessments, and Self-Assessments prior to the meeting.
- ❑ **Do only one assessment.** If you don't have time for employees to do both the team Service Assessment and the Self-Assessment, choose one. Doing both is recommended; however, if that's unrealistic for you and your team, choose the assessment that would be the most impactful for your group.
- ❑ **Establish the customer service team goals** after the meeting and communicate them to your employees at a follow-up meeting one-on-one, or as a group.

These ideas will allow you to trim approximately half an hour from the training session.

ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

To help you organize your thoughts, here is a *Pre-Meeting Checklist*.

Pre-Meeting Checklist

- ❑ Reserve meeting space, if necessary.
- ❑ Post or send meeting announcements.
- ❑ Watch the video.
- ❑ Read the *Conducting the Meeting* section of this guide.
- ❑ Review the *Class Aides* section of this guide.
- ❑ Reproduce the handouts and forms you're going to use (located in the *Class Aides* section of this guide).
- ❑ Gather flip chart pads, markers, masking tape, Post-it pads, paper.
- ❑ Create flip charts, as noted at the end of this section, to reinforce key points.
- ❑ Get giveaways (candy, inexpensive trinkets, buttons, stickers, etc.) to reinforce the learning and add another dimension of fun.
- ❑ Establish a follow-up process to reinforce the learning.

SETTING UP THE ROOM

If possible, set up the chairs and tables for small groups. Try to avoid the classroom or U-style set-up because neither is conducive to small group formations and discussions. If your group is small, consider sitting around a small table or arranging chairs in a circle.

Monthly check-in

Improving the level of customer service that you and your employees offer does not happen overnight. It is an ongoing process – one that begins with awareness and a training program like this one.

After conducting this training, follow up with your employees as they begin giving pickles away, achieve goals you set during the training or do anything to show you they are thinking of the customer as the boss! Offer praise, redirect when necessary and consider some rewards to reinforce the behaviors. Above all, illustrate the customer service behaviors you'd like your employees to emulate. Lead by example.

A monthly check-in – one-on-one or with your team – may only last 10-15 minutes but it will help ensure that customer service is top of everyone's mind. Use monthly check-ins to:

- ❑ **Share great service stories.** People love to hear success stories. They're uplifting and can make others feel like they can do it too. Sharing great service stories can be infectious and instructional.
- ❑ **Recognize employees.**
 - Praise good service: "I really liked how you talked with that customer. You really connected."
 - Praise quality work in customer terms: "You've done a great job keeping track of the inventory. Because of your efforts, we can be assured we have what our customers want, when they want it."
 - Reward good work. Present Pickle Awards, motivational gifts, thank you notes or sought after shifts, etc.
- ❑ **Talk about customer service approaches** that are working and aren't working.
- ❑ **Discuss service goals.** Developing goals isn't enough. You need to track them and discuss them to make them real and tangible.
- ❑ **Highlight recognition programs** (design your own or use the *Service Smiles* or *I Gave 'Em the Pickle* programs, which are discussed in the next section).

Recognition Program Ideas

Recognition programs serve several purposes, including:

- ❑ They get people excited.
- ❑ They help people feel as though what they do matters.
- ❑ They help employees feel as though they are part of something bigger.
- ❑ They help ensure that employees will repeat the positive behavior.

Create your own customer service recognition program, or consider the two discussed below. It's important to recognize the employee in the area of customer service and to have fun with it. Have fun with the rewards and the acknowledgement of a job well done. If your team isn't used to offering good customer service, these programs will help you overcome passive resistance or the "I'll believe it when I see it" thinking.

SERVICE SMILES

This is a simple way to encourage your team and get them excited about the customer. Every time you or a peer catches an employee doing something right as it ties into the team goal, the employee gets a Service Smile (a sticker, a handwritten smile, etc. on the tracking sheet near the employee's name). You may want to make it a fun contest that lasts a month. The employee who has the most stickers at the end of the month is the Service Smile King or Queen, etc.

The program can also be tied into a reward system. Rewards don't have to cost anything. Although monetary rewards like a complimentary lunch, a gift card, a day off, a pizza party or a bonus are nice, they aren't always realistic. Nonmonetary rewards can be motivating too. Consider the following non-monetary rewards:

- ❑ ***Giving a Traveling Pickle Award.*** A fun trophy gets passed to the deserving employee each month.
- ❑ ***Cover a shift.*** Think about how valued your employees would feel if you were the one to cover their shift so they could take it off.
- ❑ ***Placing a handwritten thank-you*** into the employee's file.
- ❑ ***Giving first choice of next week's shifts.***
- ❑ ***Letting them train the new hire*** on how to offer great customer service.

Recognize and reward individual and team efforts. The possibilities for team goals are as vast as the uniqueness of your employees and your business. Start simply. Consider a team goal such as:

- ❑ Smile and greet every customer within five seconds.
- ❑ Call the customer by his or her name.
- ❑ Bring water to the diner's table at first greeting.
- ❑ Include a handwritten thank-you in every box you pack.
- ❑ Assemble with zero defects in 30 days.
- ❑ Process shipping and receiving with no errors in a month.
- ❑ Reduce customer phone-hold time to less than a minute.

Note: After you and your employees develop team goals, it's important to talk about them and track them to make them real. It's up to you to make sure that this happens on a regular basis so you all can share in the progress that is made.

I GAVE 'EM THE PICKLE

This recognition program specifically recognizes the efforts of your employees to give away pickles! Every time you or a peer notices an employee giving away a pickle, note it on the tracking form and give that employee a pat on the back! Share the stories at your next meeting and make sure the employee feels good about it.

The pickle could be based on a team goal or it could be something the employee did on his or her own.

Again, you may want to make this a fun contest. All pickle stories are entered into a drawing, or peers anonymously vote for the best one at the end of a month, etc. Tie it into a reward system that you all agree on.

Note: The most effective way you have to encourage your team to give away pickles and offer great service is to be involved. Manage by walking around and catch them doing things right! You won't see anything perched on a chair in your office. And while you're walking around, jump in when needed and always give your employees an example to follow. Interact with your customers in the manner in which you want your employees to do so. Recognize the efforts of front-line employees and support employees.

Flip Charts

Prepare the following flip charts prior to your meeting.

- #1 Give "Em the Pickle!
- #2 Give them what they want! Add your special touch! Exceed their expectations!
- #3 Do we have any pickles to give, and if so, are we consistently giving them?
- #4 What pickles can we give as a company? What pickles can we give as individuals to add our special touch and exceed our customers' expectations?
- #5 Service, Attitude, Consistency, and Teamwork
- #6 What do our customers expect from us?
- #7 Service is having the courage to make things right for the customer.
- #8 If you like the customer, they know it.
- #9 Give what you want back. Smile! Smile! Smile!
- #10 Customer service is a high calling.
- #11 How do we help one another check our poor attitudes at the door?
- #12 (Simple drawing of wheel with spokes and center hub)
- #13 Specific Measurable Attainable Realistic Time-focused

Section 2 – Conducting the Meeting

Introduction

EXPLAIN

Welcome your employees and tell them what to expect from the meeting:

- ❑ About 1 ½ hours
- ❑ An entertaining video
- ❑ Lively discussion
- ❑ A plan to improve customer service

SAY

Make a promise. I promise you three things while you're here:

1. *You'll begin thinking about service from the customer's perspective.*
2. *You'll discover at least one simple way to personally improve the level of service you offer customers.*
3. *We'll have fun.*

Activity: Customer Service Trivia

DISTRIBUTE

To introduce the topic and help employees relax a little before watching the video, distribute the *Customer Service Trivia Handouts*. Give employees a few moments to complete them; then review the answers.

TELL

Read aloud each question below and ask the group for their answers. Use the explanations below to emphasize the answers.

CUSTOMER SERVICE TRIVIA ANSWERS

True or False

1. **Only employees who directly interact with customers are responsible for customer service.** **False.** Each and every employee impacts the customer either through direct interactions or through the quality of their work.

ASK

How does a dishwasher impact the customer who comes to the restaurant?

What about an employee who stocks product in the back room?

2. **Research suggests that almost 8 in 10 customers who leave do so because they are dissatisfied with the level of service they receive.** **True.** Seventy-five percent of customers who leave take their business elsewhere because of poor service or dissatisfaction with personnel.

3. **It's obvious when a customer is unhappy or upset – most even tell you so.** *False. Some tell you, but many just leave without saying a word. They just never come back.*
4. **It's more important to pay attention to new customers than existing ones.** *False. All customers are important! And, it costs most companies more money to attract new business than to cater to their loyal customers.*
5. **It's easier to attract new customers than to bring dissatisfied customers back.** *True. Once they're gone, it's tough to get them back!*
6. **Dissatisfied customers will badmouth the company by telling between eight and 10 other people about their negative experience.** *True. People love to grumble, and grumble they will if they believe they have been mistreated.*
7. **Customers have their own agenda, so they won't notice if you're in a bad mood.** *False. Unfortunately, they will notice because most customers will take your less-than-shining attitude personally.*
8. **You have no influence over whether a customer returns.** *False. You may not be able to control whether a customer returns, but you do have influence. If you offer them what they want, give them what they expect, and do it with a smile, you are influencing their decision to return. If you perform your job as if a customer is watching you, you are influencing their decision to return.*
9. **The customer is the boss.** *True. Yes. Yes. Yes! If you didn't have any customers, you wouldn't have a job. In other words, customers are responsible for your paycheck!*
10. **Customers can hear a smile over the phone.** *True.*

ASK

How is it possible to hear a smile over the phone?

11. **Sometimes customers can be difficult and trying.** *True. But, they're still the boss.*
12. **When a customer has a problem, it's important that they understand your point of view.** *False. Their point of view is the important one and the only one that matters to them as a customer.*
13. **Those who work behind-the-scenes don't have to worry about customer service.** *False. Every person in the company impacts the customer's decision to return. All of our work ends up in front of the customer in one way or another.*
14. **How you perform your job is a form of customer service.** *True. Quality of work is a form of customer service too.*
15. **Customers walk in the door trusting you; you just need to reaffirm that confidence before they leave.** *True. They are expecting you to be wonderful! To be grateful for their business. To serve them. So give them what they expect! Better yet, give them more than they expect -- give them the pickle.*

Giving Away Pickles

Post Flip chart #1: Give "Em the Pickle!"

EXPLAIN

According to Bob Farrell, we're all in the same business, the people business. Our business is not what we sell or make; it's who we serve. Our job then is to make customers happy. How do we do that? We "give 'em the Pickle!"

TELL

Suggest that employees, as they watch the video, consider the following:

- ❑ ***The importance of giving away pickles***
- ❑ ***The four key principles that are critical to getting customers to return.***

PLAY

Show the group the video

ASK

Why are giving pickles important in business? Customers expect good service: it has become the standard. Giving away pickles is a part of offering **EXCELLENT SERVICE** and sets you apart from other similar businesses.

Post flip chart # 2: Give them what they want! Add your special touch! Exceed their expectations!

SAY

Giving away pickles means:

- ***giving customers what they want***
- ***offering your special touch to exceed customers' expectations***

ASK

Who can give away pickles, the company or you? The answer is: both.

EXPLAIN

Companies offer pickles first and foremost by creating an environment in which employees feel empowered to offer pickles to their customers, by creating an atmosphere in which pickle giving is cheered, encouraged and rewarded. Companies also give pickles when they offer something extra to customers as a company policy or set standards of how the customer is treated. Examples might include free gift-wrapping, greeting each customer at the store entrance, offers of “buy two, get one free,” never putting a phone customer on hold for more than 10 seconds, etc.

Employees give pickles when they respond to the individual needs of their customers and exceed their expectations by offering special touches. Examples might include calling a customer to let them know about a sale, a kind word or compliment to each customer you serve, going the extra mile to make sure a delivery is made on time by hand-delivering the package to the shipping department, offering a treat to a unruly child of a customer to help settle them down, etc.

SAY

*I'm going to give you a handout that outlines two stories from Bob Farrell's book **Give 'Em the Pickle.***

Note: You should read the stories in their entirety on pages 114 and 117 in Farrell's book **Give 'em the Pickle.**

DISTRIBUTE

Give employees the handout.

TELL

Ask employees to take a few moments to read both stories and answer the questions.

ASK

How do you think this simple act of starting lawn mower engines in the first story affects the business and the personal lives of the garbage collectors? They gain new business and their customers are fiercely loyal. They also feel good about helping out their neighbors.

How do you think this father and son feel every time they give away a pickle? They feel great!

What's the pickle in the bank story? Validating the parking ticket.

*What do you think happened? The man did do business with the bank and they did not validate his parking ticket. **He closed his account.***

Do you think this customer shared this experience with anyone? As many people as possible. The average person tells eight to 10 people. In this case, the story ended up in the The Wall Street Journal.

SAY

The man left the bank and walked to the bank across the street to open a new account -- with one million, two hundred sixty thousand dollars.

ASK

Was this a problem with the bank's pickle policy or with the teller? Possibly both. The bank probably should have offered free validation to any bank customer, and the teller should have been more in tune with taking care of a customer.

Activity: Give "Em the Pickle!

TELL

Remind employees that to improve the level of service offered to customers, it's important to know our pickles. Give employees a few minutes in their groups to discuss the following questions.

Post flip chart #3:

Do we have any pickles to give, and if so, are we consistently giving them?

Post flip chart #4:

What pickles can we give as a company? What pickles can we give as individuals to add our special touch and exceed our customers' expectations?

TELL

Instruct groups to share their answers. Record flip chart #4 question and answers on flip chart paper for use on action plans.

Note: Depending on the current level of service you offer, it may be challenging to identify pickles for your organization. It is also important to consider that pickles might differ from customer to customer. Consider starting small: addressing the customer by name, greeting with a smile, opening a new register when a third person joins a checkout line, carrying bags to the door or the car, etc.



The Key Principles

SAY

We've talked about giving away pickles. Now let's talk about the four principles Bob Farrell discussed in the video.

ASK

What are the four principles we should focus on to help ensure our customers return?

Post flip chart #5: Service, Attitude, Consistency, and Teamwork

SAY

Let's talk about each of these principles in detail.

KEY PRINCIPLE #1: Service

ASK

How would you define the term "customer service?" Answers will vary

RECORD

Write the answers on flip chart paper. Highlight the idea that serving the customer poorly is still customer service.

ASK

How would you define outstanding customer service? Answers will vary.

Note: Making the customer your number-one priority can be a big step for some organizations. Make sure you are ready to support this concept before proceeding. It will require empowering your team members to respond to customers' needs and wants without always getting approval from management. It may also require your organization to change certain policies or procedures. The result of doing this will, however, pay tremendous benefits to the customers, the team members and the company.

ASK

Do you think serving the customer is our number-one priority?

RECORD

Record answers on flip chart paper. Make sure the responses are not just yes and no answers, but have explanations that can be addressed.

ASK

What can we do to ensure that serving the customer is always our top priority?

RECORD

Record the suggestions on flip chart paper. These suggestions can then be used as you or the team members create Personal Action Plans.

Activity: What Do Our Customers Expect From Us?

DISTRIBUTE

Divide your team into groups of two or three. Give each group a sheet of flip chart paper.

TELL

Instruct them to take a couple of minutes to discuss what their customers expect from them and to be prepared to share their group's answer.

Post flip chart #6: *What do our customers expect from us?*

ASK

Encourage each group to offer their thoughts. Comment on any similarities in answers and try to keep the debrief moving. Encourage groups to expand on previous the group's answers instead of duplicating answers.

RECORD

Post all flip chart pages.

Note: If you have front-line employees and support employees in your meeting, group them with peers for this activity. Your front-line employees and support employees should have distinct answers to this question. If your team is only front-line or only support, you will probably need to expand their thinking to include the other roles in the company. To do so, consider asking the following question at the end of this activity (customized to your business): What do you think our customers expect from our front line (cashiers, customer service representatives, call center employees, receptionists, tellers, agents, etc.)? What do you think our customers expect from our support employees (kitchen, backroom, shipping, cashiers, call center, etc.)?

Having the Courage to Make Things Right

Post flip chart #7: *Service is having the courage to make things right for the customer.*

ASK

What do you think Bob Farrell means when he says that service is having the courage to make things right for the customer?

RECORD

Write the answers on flip chart paper.

ASK

How can we make things right for our customers?

RECORD

Write the question and answers on flip chart paper for use on the action plans.

Note: Making things right often comes down to the person in direct contact with the customer making a decision to take care of the customer on a moments notice. Make sure your team members feel empowered to make these decisions. You may want to discuss examples that demonstrate your willingness to support their efforts in delivering great customer service by making things right for the customer.

KEY PRINCIPLE # 2 – Attitude

ASK

How would you define attitude?

SAY

According to Webster’s New World Dictionary, attitude is a manner of acting, feeling, or thinking that shows one’s disposition, opinion, etc.

ASK

What does that mean with regard to serving our customers?

Post flip chart #8: If you like the customer, they know it!

EXPLAIN

This statement is not literal. It refers to your attitude. Regardless of how you feel, it's your job to put on a show. It's like being an entertainer!

Activity: Hi. How Are You?

TELL

For this activity, direct your employees to stand and get a partner. Explain that one person will be the customer and the other will be the employee. Tell them to do the following:

1. **Customers:** Take a step forward and say hi to the employee who is helping you.
2. **Employees:** In a monotone voice and without a smile say, "Hi. How are you?"
3. **Employees:** Now in a monotone voice and a sincere smile say, "Hi. How are you?"
4. **Switch roles and repeat. Then, return everyone to his or her seats.**

ASK

Do we make a conscious decision to smile? Yes.

Is it possible to smile even when we're not in a very good mood? Yes.

What might happen to our mood if we smile when we interact with our customers? It may improve.

Why do you think we went through this exercise? To show that it's difficult to smile and not have a smile in your voice. Smiling usually gives way to friendly dialogue.

Does attitude matter for employees who don't directly interact with customers? Absolutely! Attitude shows in the quality of one's work. Employees who are having a bad day or who are in a foul mood generally don't care as much about their job or the quality of what they are doing because they are inwardly focused.

Post flip chart #9: Give what you want back. Smile! Smile! Smile!

EXPLAIN

A friendly demeanor begets friendliness. If you smile, chances are your customer will too.

ASK

Let's see a show of hands: .How many of you are aware of what kind of mood you are in when you come into work?

SAY

Generally most of us know how we're feeling.

ASK

Let's see another show of hands: How many of you are aware of what kind of day your customer is having?

EXPLAIN

Unless a customer is overtly happy or obviously upset, you don't really know much about how your customer is feeling. You don't know if your customer is having an ordinary, happy day or a day in the middle of a life crisis.

Post flip chart # 10: Customer service is a high calling.

SAY

If you do perceive how your customer is feeling, chances are that you don't know why.

And that's why serving the customer is such a noble profession.

The impact you can have on a customer is immeasurable and often underestimated.

Consider the customer:

- **who just had an argument with a loved one**
- **who lost her job**
- **who doesn't feel well**
- **whose wife left him**
- **who is under pressure at work**
- **whose most positive interaction today may be with you – either directly or indirectly**

Activity: *Developing Shining Attitudes*

SAY

We all have bad days. But we have a responsibility to our customers, our peers and ourselves to try to be the best “us” we can be while we’re at work. So how do we encourage one another to do that?

Post flip chart #11: How do we help one another check our poor attitudes at the door?

TELL

Have your employees work in their groups to discuss how to help one another check their poor attitudes at the door. If they need help getting started, give them a few examples:

- ❑ ***Give a peer a quick attitude break, if possible, when it’s obvious he or she is having a tough time.***
- ❑ ***Praise the effort it takes to smile when someone’s having an off day. (You can even make a contest out of it with the Service Smiles Tracking Sheet.)***
- ❑ ***Give employees a two-minute huddle at the start of a shift to “unload” anything that may interfere with their ability to have a shining attitude.***

Note: Keep in mind that, as a manager, it’s your responsibility to keep your team encouraged, enthusiastic and pumped up. Your attitude is the most important and contagious of your team. You set the tone.

RECORD

Write down question and answers on flip chart paper for use on the action plans.

KEY PRINCIPLE #3 – Consistency

ASK

Let’s see a show of hands: How many of you were surprised when the customer refused to patronize Farrell’s Ice Cream Parlor anymore because he was being charged for his extra pickle?

Let’s see another show of hands: How many of you think that other customers in the same situation might be upset but not say anything?

Let's see a show of hands again: *If they're upset and don't say anything, what do you think they will do? Keep encouraging answers until someone says that they won't come back.*

EXPLAIN

The customer gave Bob Farrell a gift by expressing his displeasure with the company. A lot of customers won't say anything – they'll just decide never to come back.

SAY

- ❑ *Consistency is important to customers.*
- ❑ *They trust you when they walk in and want you to reaffirm that trust by giving them what they want and expect. And if you give them even more than they expect – all the better!*

The Importance of Consistency

ASK

Let's see a show of hands: *Who remembers the child's name in Bob Farrell's story about parents who were upset their son didn't get his birthday song? Alex*
Why is his name so memorable? Because we can relate with the moment.

SAY

- ❑ *Maybe we can relate to Alex's parents – or Bob Farrell – or Alex.*
- ❑ *Most likely we can all relate to that moment of truth when we have an upset customer in front of us.*
- ❑ *Consistency by definition means "conformity based on previous practices."*

ASK

What was the previous practice at Farrell's that Alex's parents were expecting? They expected the wait staff to sing "Happy Birthday" to Alex.

Why were Alex's parents so upset?

Note: Most likely, your team will say something like: “Because they didn’t get the birthday song as they expected.” Continue discussion with the following questions to help your team understand that the parents were upset with the lack of consistency and that Farrell’s didn’t meet their expectations.

ASK

Do you think Alex’s parents would have been upset if Farrell’s was not known for the practice of singing “Happy Birthday” to its patrons? No.

So can we say that Alex’s parents were upset because Farrell’s wasn’t consistent? It didn’t live up to its reputation? Yes.

SAY

- ❑ *The good news is that Bob Farrell made it right by encouraging the whole restaurant to cheer and sing to Alex.*
- ❑ *Alex’s parents continued to be loyal customers after that.*
- ❑ *Seventy percent of upset customers will do business with you again if you resolve the complaint in their favor.*
- ❑ *The percentage of upset customers who will do business with you again if you resolve the problem **on the spot** is even higher.*

ASK

Let’s see a show of hands: *Who believes that percentage rises to 100 percent? 95 percent? 85 percent? 75 percent?*

EXPLAIN

A full 95 percent of upset customers will return to your business if you resolve their complaint on the spot.

Activity: Are We Consistent?

TELL

Give groups a couple minutes to discuss the following questions:

ASK

*In what ways do our customers count on us to be consistent?
In what ways are we sometimes inconsistent?*

RECORD

Write the answers on a flip chart page.

Note: If applicable, discuss how to become more consistent.

EXPLAIN

Consistency is about giving customers what they expect. And the team that works together well makes it easier to be consistent. It is important to recognize that the customer who was upset about not getting an extra pickle for free had a new set of expectations based upon the “extra touch” or outstanding service of previous waiters. Once you start giving out “Pickles” it is important that the entire team live up to the new standard -- every day.

KEY PRINCIPLE #4 – Teamwork

Post flip chart #12: Drawing of a wheel with spokes and center hub

ASK

Any ideas on how this picture of a wheel represents our business?

EXPLAIN

- The rim is the company.
- The spokes are all the jobs (front-line and support).
- The center hub is the manager.
-

SAY

- If spokes are missing, or some spokes are aligned and others are not, the wheel will wobble.*
- If the rim is bent, the wheel will wobble.*

- *If the center hub doesn't support the spokes, the wheel will wobble.*
- *If the wheel wobbles too much, it collapses.*

EXPLAIN

We all need to help one another achieve our goals so that we don't wobble.

ASK

What is our most important goal? Encourage dialogue until someone says, "taking care of the customer."

Note: To illustrate the importance of teamwork, highlight the following example or use an example that suits your company.

SAY

***Consider this scenario:** The wait staff at a restaurant is attentive and personable and exceeds customer expectations in every interaction. Time and again, though, the wait staff is apologizing for overcooked food or dirty glassware.*

ASK

What two spokes in the wheel aren't working well? Cooks and dishwashers.
How does that impact the customer? It leaves the customer frustrated and dissatisfied. They aren't getting the service they expect.

EXPLAIN

Emphasize that teamwork is a critical part of ensuring that the customer will return. Everything we do eventually in some form ends up in front of the customer. Whether you're in the warehouse, on the shipping docks, at a front counter, in the billing department, part of a cleaning crew or on the assembly line, what you do **impacts each other** and **impacts the customer**. We are all interconnected. If one of us fails it can affect us all. Taking care of the customer is truly a team effort. To succeed we not only need to do the best we can, we need to look for ways to help each other out. We need to look for ways to make each other look good.

Activity: The Spokes of a Wheel

EXPLAIN

List the various jobs that make up the spokes of your wheel. If possible, group employees according to their roles. If you don't have front-line and support people in the same meeting, discuss the various roles as a group.

Assign a different spoke to each group and let them discuss the following. Then, discuss as a group.

ASK

How does this spoke's performance affect customer?

How does this spoke's performance affect the other spokes?

Note: We've provided a couple of examples below to help you debrief this activity.

*Wheel spoke: **Shipping Department of a mail-order catalog company***

How does this spoke's performance affect customers?

- *The item may be a gift for someone else and the customer may be embarrassed if it doesn't arrive on time or the wrong item is shipped.*
- *If the item is not packaged properly, the item may be damaged and unusable, thereby inconveniencing the customer.*

How does this spoke's performance affect the other spokes?

- *The customer service department will have to handle an angry customer.*
- *The accounting department may spend more time on paperwork as a result of discounting the product or paying for overnight shipping.*
- *The customer may take their business elsewhere, resulting in a loss of revenue for the entire company.*

*Wheel spoke: **Housecleaning Department of a hotel***

How does this spoke's performance affect customers?

- *The customer doesn't want a dirty room.*
- *The customer is inconvenienced by having to change rooms.*

- *The customer may have nowhere else to go.*

How does this spoke's performance affect the other spokes (restaurant, front desk, etc.)?

- *The customer has reason to believe kitchen would be dirty as well, etc.*
- *Front desk has to deal with the upset customer and try to find another room, etc.*

SAY

A team that works well together helps create a customer-focused business. All parts of our team are critical in ensuring that our customers get what they want, get what they expect and return again and again. Teamwork is the cornerstone of good service.

Assessing Our Service Efforts

Activity: Customer Service Assessments

Decide whether you'd like your employees to complete the *Team Service Assessment* or the *Self-Assessment* – or both.

DISTRIBUTE

Give your employees the handouts. Give employees a few minutes to go through the assessments.

EXPLAIN

Let them know that they will use their awareness from the assessments to create a personal action plan.

Activity: Customer Service Goals

TELL

Direct employees to the following three flipcharts you posted that list action plan ideas:

- ❑ **#4: *What pickles can we give as a company? What pickles can we give as individuals to add our special touch and exceed our customers' expectations?***
- ❑ **#7: *Service is having the courage to make things right for the customer.***

- ❑ **#11: How do we help one another check our poor attitudes at the door?**

EXPLAIN

Although there are a lot of ways to improve the level of customer service you and your team currently offer, you want to start with one or two areas in which to work on. On a flip chart page, write your priorities. Then explain that as a group you will develop a customer service goal that is S.M.A.R.T.:

- ❑ **Specific**
- ❑ **Measurable**
- ❑ **Attainable**
- ❑ **Realistic**
- ❑ **Time-focused**

Post flip chart #13: *Specific...Measurable...Attainable...Realistic...Time-focused...*

TELL

Assess a goal to illustrate whether it is a S.M.A.R.T. goal. Use either of the examples below or use one of your own. S.M.A.R.T. examples:

- ❑ ***Greet every customer with a smile within 5 seconds.***
- ❑ ***Have zero shipping errors for three months in a row.***
- ❑

ASK

To assess the goal as a group, ask the following questions:

- ❑ *Is it specific?*
- ❑ *Is it measurable? How?*
- ❑ *Is it attainable?* Mention teamwork and the potential for a recognition program.
- ❑ *Is it realistic?*
- ❑ *Is it time-focused?* The first one isn't, so it needs to be reworked: "At the end of 30 days, every customer should be greeted with a smile."

Note: If you have too many employees in your meeting to efficiently go through this activity, consider looking at the action plan ideas as a group and telling your team that, due to time constraints, you will create the team's goals (or consider creating a smaller work group to develop the goals with you). Explain that you will communicate them at a later time.

Personal Action Plans

DISTRIBUTE

Give an action plan to each employee. As employees are completing them, walk around and assist by doing the following:

- ❑ **Answer questions.**
- ❑ **Encourage them in their choices for improvement areas.**
- ❑ **Redirect, if necessary.**

Make sure the actions are specific and realistic.

Activity: But What About...?

OBJECTIVE

This activity is designed for work teams that may be resistant to customer service improvements. Perhaps the employees may feel the policies and procedures aren't in place for them to truly take care of the customer. Or maybe they feel the added work won't be rewarded. The objective is to get your employees to talk about their concerns. Emphasize that this activity is:

- ❑ **A forum for them to share their concerns**
- ❑ **A way for you to understand their concerns**
- ❑ **The first step in solving potential problems**

Note: If your team doesn't need this type of forum, skip this activity.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

DISTRIBUTE

Give employees the "But What About...?" handouts.

TELL

Have employees discuss these questions in their groups and then share them aloud.

ASK

1. *What concerns do you have about anything we've talked about today?*
2. *What hurdles do we face?*
3. *What ideas do you have to help make the ideas we've discussed a reality?*

4. *What ideas do you have to make customer service a priority for everyone?*

Summarizing the Key Principles

DISTRIBUTE

This should be a quick activity. Give groups a flip chart page with each of the following headings:

- Give ‘Em the Pickle**
- Attitude**
- Consistency**
- Teamwork**
- Service**

TELL

Tell employees they have about two minutes to write down as many things as they can remember about each of the principle. Their goal is to come up with points the other employees won't remember.

To debrief, have each group present one of the flip charts. Tell the other employees to shout out answers while the group that created the flip chart marks them off. If the original group has anything left on their flip chart paper, they get a point. Repeat for each of the flip charts, having a different group present each one.

Note: Emphasize that the points they record need to be actual learning points.

CONCLUSION

EXPLAIN

Collect the action plans. Explain that you will follow up with them (individually or as a group) to review their action plans with them.

If you've decided to use the Service Smile recognition program or the "Give 'Em the Pickle" recognition program, explain the details. Tell them the date(s) for the Monthly Check-in.

Section 3: Class Aides

Included in this section are the following reproducible handouts and forms:

- Meeting Announcement***
- Customer Service Trivia Handout***
- Pickle Stories***
- Service Assessment***
- Self-Assessment***
- Personal Action Plan***
- “But What About...?” Handout***
- Service Smiles Tracking Sheet***
- “I Gave ‘Em the Pickle” Recognition Sheet***

Meeting Announcement

Dear _____ :

As part of our commitment to improve the level of customer service we offer, we are conducting team meetings to discuss how to exceed our customers' expectations.

During this meeting we will discuss:

- The customer service concept of giving our customers a pickle***
- How we can give our customers what they want by “giving ‘em the pickle”***
- How your attitude impacts a customer’s experience***
- Why our service efforts should be consistent***
- Why teamwork is critical to ensuring that our customers return again and again***
- Our customers’ expectations for good service and why we need to exceed their expectations***

The details for the meeting you are scheduled to attend are as follows:

DATE:

TIME:

LOCATION:



Customer Service Trivia Handout

TRUE OR FALSE

1. Only employees who directly interact with customers are responsible for customer service.
2. Research suggests that almost eight in 10 customers who leave do so because they are dissatisfied with the level of service they receive.
3. It's obvious when a customer is unhappy or upset – most even tell you so.
4. It's more important to pay attention to new customers than existing ones.
5. It's easier to attract new customers than to bring dissatisfied customers back.
6. Dissatisfied customers will badmouth the company by telling between 8 and 10 other people about their negative experience.
7. Customers have their own agenda, so they won't notice if you're in a bad mood.
8. You have no influence over whether a customer returns.
9. The customer is the boss.
10. Customers can hear a smile over the phone.
11. Sometimes customers can be difficult and trying.
12. When a customer has a problem, it's important that they understand your point of view.
13. Those who work behind the scenes don't have to worry about customer service.
14. How you perform your job is a form of customer service.
15. Customers walk in the door trusting you; you just need to reaffirm that confidence before they leave.



PICKLE! Stories

Pickle Stories from Give 'Em the Pickle, by Bob Farrell and Bill Perkins

FATHER AND SON GARBAGEMEN GIVE PICKLES AWAY ALL SUMMER

After speaking to a group of independent garbage men, one man came up to Bob Farrell and told him that he and his son give pickles away all summer. Bob envisioned this big man giving jars full of pickles away as gifts. After all, what kind of pickle does a garbage man have to offer other than making sure the trash can lids don't roll down the street?

The independent garbage man explained, saying that he and his son operate a family-owned garbage removal business, and all summer long they interrupt their work to start lawnmowers.

'Whenever we see a man or woman cranking away, trying to start a lawnmower, we stop our truck and help them out. I think we know how to start every lawnmower ever made!'

How do you think this simple act affects their business and their personal lives?

How do you think this father and son feel every time they give away a pickle?

What do you think the result of giving away this pickle has been over the years?

VALIDATING PARKING TICKETS

In his book, Bob Farrell talks about an article in the *Wall Street Journal*. A man dressed in dirty coveralls entered a bank and asked a teller to validate his parking ticket. He explained that he had to drop off a prescription for his wife.

The teller asked, "Did you do business in the bank today?"

“No, I didn’t,” he replied. “I had to run into the drug store next door, and they don’t validate parking. I didn’t bring any cash with me and hoped you’d validate my parking ticket since I have an account here.”

“I’m sorry sir,” the woman replied, “but if you didn’t do business in the bank today, I can’t validate your parking ticket. “

What’s the pickle in this story?

How do you think the customer felt?

What do you think happened?



Service Assessment

Take a moment to consider the statements below and how they apply to your team and the service your customers receive. Think about what you believe the customer receives from you and your team during each visit and phone call.

Never Rarely Occasionally Often Always

I believe:

- 1. Front-line employees work to exceed customer expectations.**
- 2. Front-line employees understand how their jobs impact the customer.**
- 3. Support employees understand how their jobs impact the customer.**
- 4. Support employees feel part of the overall team.**
- 5. Customers feel cared for and as though their business matters to us.**
- 6. Customers often feel that we exceeded their expectations.**
- 7. Customers know what to expect from us and get it.**
- 8. Customers are always greeted with a smile both in person and on the phone.**
- 9. We work together to take care of the customer.**
- 10. We all put the customer’s needs first.**

Self-Assessment - Front-line Employees

Take a moment to consider the statements below and how they apply in your current job.

Never Rarely Occasionally Often Always

1. I treat each customer as if he or she was the only one that day.
2. When I'm in a bad mood, I make sure it doesn't show at work.
3. I smile every time I interact with a customer both in person and on the phone.
4. When it's really busy and I'm feeling a little overwhelmed, I tell myself that if it weren't for the customers, I wouldn't have a job.
5. When a customer complains, I realize it's an offer to solve the problem because the customer wants to continue to be a loyal customer.
6. I look at things from the customer's perspective.
7. When I'm having a tough day, I try to turn it around so it doesn't impact the customer.
8. If I can't help a customer, I find someone who can.
9. I work hard to exceed customer expectations.
10. I think of the customer as my boss.

Self-Assessment - Support Employees

Take a moment to consider the statements below and how they apply in your current job.

Never Rarely Occasionally Often Always

1. I treat each task I do as if the customer is watching me.
2. When I'm in a bad mood, I make sure it doesn't show at work.
3. When it's really busy and I'm feeling a little overwhelmed, I tell myself that if it weren't for the customers, I wouldn't have a job.
4. When a customer calls to complain, I realize it's an offer to solve the problem because the customer wants to continue to be a loyal customer.
5. I look at things from the customer's perspective.
6. When I'm having a tough day, I try to turn it around.
7. I work hard to exceed customer expectations.
8. I think of the customer as my boss.



Personal Action Plan

PERSONAL GOALS

Review your self-assessment and choose two areas in which you can improve.

1. Area for improvement:

I will do the following:

2. Area for improvement:

I will do the following:

TEAM GOALS

After discussing what kind of pickles you can give away as well as the key principles, note your team goals. (Your manager may choose to focus on only one or two areas.)

1. Giving away pickles: *We will consistently give our customers the following pickle:*

2. Service: *We will have the courage to make things right for the customer. To do so, we will:*

3. Attitude: *To help one another develop and maintain shining attitudes, we will:*

4. Consistency: *We will consistently give our customers the following pickles so we can go beyond their expectations:*

5. Teamwork: *We will work together in the following ways to improve customer service:*

Our Monthly Check-in is scheduled for: _____

"But, what About..." Handout

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What concerns do you have about anything we've talked about today?**
- 2. What hurdles do we face?**
- 3. What ideas do you have to help make the ideas we've discussed a reality?**
- 4. What ideas do you have to make customer service a priority for everyone?**



Service Smiles Tracking Sheet

Month:

Employee Name	Comments



"I Gave `em the PICKLE" Recognition Sheet

This is how he/she gave `em the pickle....
