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CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY SPECIAL ISSUE

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Customer Service That Counts!

By Laura Winterroth, Managing Director

What can we do to maximize the return on our Customer Service training investment? **Answer:** Develop a sound Customer Service Strategy. Based on our experience designing customer service training programs for organizations like the American Museum of Natural History, Crystal Cruises, FIT, and Lutheran Family Health Centers to name a few, we've created a model to guide the design of a Customer Service Initiative.

For your long-term success, begin with your organization's vision, mission and strategic objectives. These will focus your initiative on what matters most in your organization. And, you'll need a champion at the executive level—someone who “walks the talk” and believes in the value to the organization of achieving consistent customer satisfaction. Once you are sure you have this strong foundation, let the questions on the right be your planning guide:



- ◆ **Customer Service Philosophy and Expectations:** What is our organization's unique view of the customer? How do we define excellence in customer service?
- ◆ **Communication:** Have we developed a plan to communicate the CS initiative as it happens?
- ◆ **Hiring Profile and Recruitment:** Have we developed a hiring profile that focuses on CS skills? Do we ask effective interview questions to assess customer service savvy in our candidates?
- ◆ **Accountability/Performance Reviews:** Do we include customer service skills as a key competency in our performance appraisal process?
- ◆ **Management Coaching:** Do we train and coach managers to assess CS skills and provide feedback and coaching to employees on the job?
- ◆ **Policies, Procedures, & Processes:** Are we constantly seeking ways to streamline processes and make policies and procedures customer-focused?
- ◆ **Rewards and Recognition:** Have we established formal and informal ways of recognizing employees who delight customers?
- ◆ **Training:** Have we designed training (on-the-job, e-learning, classroom, etc.) that develops the key skills necessary for effective customer service: communication skills, job skills, customer knowledge, organizational knowledge?
- ◆ **Ongoing CS Improvement & Education:** Have we developed a long-term plan that includes new employee and refresher training, answers to FAQ's, employee CS suggestion programs, and CS focused team meetings? Do we have ways to evaluate and measure the CS Initiative, including mystery shopper, customer surveys, and collecting and comparing quantifiable data?
- ◆ **Management Coaching:** Do we train and coach managers to assess customer service skills and provide feedback and coaching to employees on the job?

Undoubtedly, bringing about world-class customer service takes work, but the results will give you *customer service that counts!* □