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Good Morning, My name is Dennis Smith and this morning I wanted to share some thoughts on Best practices for Customer Service in the 21st Century Library. I would like to say that I'm going to present some of the best of the best practices for customer service, but those of us who have working in libraries and customer service know that our users keep changing their expectations and raising the bar of what they want out of a 21st Century Library. But I think that I can offer some practices that will evolve along with our users expectations.
The subject of customer service is a very broad subject that we could spend a great deal of time exploring. So today, I'm going to present five basic strategies or practices, that I think are key when delivering customer service in the library. These areas are Remember the Basics, Shared Commitment, Consistency, Technology, Challenges and Opportunities.
First, I want to talk about remembering the basics. I think it is important to remember that even as a modern library with growing electronic holdings and greater emphasis on technology, that we remember our patrons and customers are still people. The basics of customer service are still the foundation that each staff member use as the primary best practice.

I was looking for the perfect list and I found a pretty good one. Greeting the user when the walk up to the service area. Body language, users will hear more from that than what you are actually saying. Listening repeating and being empathetic. My favorite saying is that it may be the 50th time I’ve heard that questions, but it only the first time that person has asked it.

The Basics

1. Greet every User
2. Be aware of non-verbal clues
3. Listen
4. Restate the problem or question
5. Be Empathetic

(Lenox, 2009)
The Basics

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<td>6.</td>
<td>Provide alternatives to “No”</td>
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<td>Reserve judgment</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Get (back) to them as soon as possible</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Follow your gut instinct</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Thank them for using the library</td>
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So how many people really enjoy saying No to a users. I feel that giving them options really does say, we are willing to do what we can to help them. With all the technology we have, I think that just getting back to the user is a hard practice to keep, but it makes a big difference to that customer. The rest of these are all part of providing a good experience to our users.
I know this is pretty busy, but does anyone recognize this bullets?
Those were part of Yale’s Standards of Excellence for customer service. This is dated from 1999, so I’m not sure how much it is in use today. I think it is important to not only have this type of shared commitment but also remember to incorporate into the library and the library services. Many organizations have a great list of standards, visions and missions, but the most successful organization are ones that use these standards everyday. I believe this is where you and the team can find a shared agreement for the type of library you want and how you want your patrons and customers to see you.
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Let me ask you, how many of you have called or visited a organization and asked a question for which you received different answers depending on who you asked. I think that a best practice is to strive to provide our users with the right answer every time. A very noble goal, but it takes a lot of work for the library to do this. First, I would say, customer service is more teamwork now in order for this to happen. The library is constantly evolving, changing and improving. Keeping up with everything is nearly impossible for the staff member at a service desk to handle. I think the practices that will help all of us is to rely on our team to help. It is ok to not have every answer, but each team member should strive to know who on the team to ask to find that answer. Silos don’t work in today’s library. That is where communication and training can help to make this happen.

In most organization, if you ask what needs improvement, communication is usually the first answer and training the second. I think that these will always be a challenge for the library but if the library and the staff commit to these, it is possible to see improved customer service and I believe a better environment for staff.
Technology

- Understand how the library delivers services using technology
- Technology serves us, not the other way around
- Don’t let technology get in the way of good customer service

Technology – A very important part of service delivering in the library today. So it is important that one of the strategies for providing excellent customer service is to understand the tools we use. As an example, it was only recently that I got a personal smart phone, however, I been working with users to get them the information they need on their smart phone for a while.

But the important part of technology is don’t let it control you and your services. Make sure that it doesn’t stop you from providing good customer service.
Customer service is Our job with a big O. So be apart of looking for ways to improve the systems and processes that you use to deliver customer service. One of the most important parts of our job is to resolve issues and conflicts for our users. It is interesting that when I attend sessions on customer service and the speaker gets to the “How do you handle a user with an issue or who is irate”, you can hear a pin drop and all the hands go up. I believe there is not perfect method to resolving an issue, but that each of us developed that path through experience, training and learning from our fellow team members. I think what is important is that there is conversation, training and development of the best practice within the team and using outside resources.

This last item I would say could go on a slide all by itself. For me, I have become most successful with customer service through my involvement within the library, within the university and within the community. There is a wealth of opportunity and information out there with just a little effort. This helps to promote the communication, training and other best practices that I talked about earlier. I really believe that this is one of the best practices that each of us could develop.
In the home stretch, I would say that these five best practices. These areas are Remember the Basics, Shared Commitment, Consistency, Technology, Challenges and Opportunities are a starting point to developing a 21st Century Library that provides excellent customer service to its users.
Customer Service is a team effort!

To leave you with a final thought. Customer Service is a team effort. This include everyone and remember that providing excellent customer to other team members in the library will contribute to providing the best service to the users.
Here my contact information as well as my selected works site. My presentation is available there as well as some other information about me and my experience.

Thanks you for having me and now we having time for questions you may have.
References


- Wagner, P. (2010). Staying committed to great customer service when your library is in chaos.


- Yale University Libraries. (2010). *Access services committee*. Retrieved 01/05, 2012, from [http://www.library.yale.edu/about/committees/asc_committee.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/about/committees/asc_committee.html)