

# Customer Service

## Issue One: Who is the Customer?

Your customer base extends beyond the riders on your buses to include organizations, businesses and other individuals in your community. Because transit is a public service overseen by the local government, your customers also include people in the broader community in which you provide service.

For example, by dropping off a rider at a hospital or a senior center, the organizations that run those facilities also become your customer because you transport their clients (and contribute to the success of their business). Similarly, if your bus drops a client off late, that could negatively impact their business.

Transit, as a public service, relies on government funding, and because of that your customers are also state and county representatives and voting tax-payers.

### Your customers beyond transit riders:

- Doctors' offices
- The community
- Hospitals
- Non-passengers
- Libraries
- Schools and colleges
- Senior centers
- Shopping centers
- Local businesses
- Government agencies
- Stores and/or the mall

\*\*Information taken directly from National RTAP's Customer Driven Service Training Module

# Customer Service

## Issue Two: Transit Customers' Needs

The following have been identified as the seven basic needs of transit customers (adapted from the Transit Cooperative Research Program Report 54):

- 1 Reliability - customers count on your services to get them where they need to be.
- 2 Safety & Security - customers need to feel safe from the transit stop to their destination.
- 3 Convenience and Accessibility - services should be easy to access & take riders where they need to go at the arranged time.
- 4 Clean and Comfortable - vehicles, transit stops & drivers themselves should be neat.
- 5 Understandable - both current & new customers must know how to use the system.
- 6 Affordable - services should be affordable & take into account different passengers' ability to pay.
- 7 Friendly and/or Empathetic - drivers should be sensitive to all customers.

\*\*Information taken directly from National RTAP's Customer Driven Service Training Module

# Customer Service

## Quiz One: Who is the Customer?

Please answer the following questions:

1. The quality of your transit service impacts the businesses in your community.

True or False (circle one)

2. Which of these is NOT true? (choose one)

- a) Public transportation's customers are only those who ride the bus
- b) Public transportation's customer base extends beyond transit riders

3. Both senior centers and shopping malls are public transportation customers.

True or False (circle one)

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# Customer Service

## Quiz Two: Transit Customers' Needs

Please answer the following questions:

1. Which of the following are needs of transit customers? (circle all that apply)

- a) Safety and security
- b) Affordability
- c) Convenience and accessibility

2. A bus driver's appearance does not impact customer service as long as the bus and bus shelters are clean and presentable.

True or False (circle one)

3. Passengers need transit drivers to be friendly and sensitive to all customers.

True or False (circle one)

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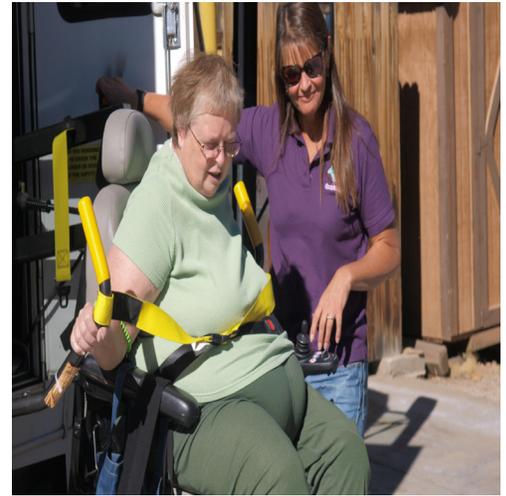
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# Customer Service

## Issue Three: Steps in Quality Customer Service

The following five basic steps summarize everything involved in providing quality customer service. By mastering these five actions, you will be providing exceptional customer service and will make fulfilling your responsibilities significantly easier.

1. Have a positive attitude.
2. Welcome customers.
3. Identify customer needs.
4. Provide for customer needs.
5. Thank customers for using your service.



\*\*Information taken directly from National RTAP's Customer Driven Service Training Module. Photo by Nusura, Inc.

# Customer Service

## Issue Four: Who is Responsible for Morale?

Every member of your company is responsible for good internal morale - including you! How we treat each other at work - including how we welcome each other, address each other and care for each other - directly influences how we interact with our customers. If you work in a workplace with low morale, it is very difficult to provide excellent customer service. If you work in an organization where people greet one another with a smile and are generally friendly and polite, you are more likely to treat your customers with a similar attitude.

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How can you build positive morale in your workplace?

- Say "Good Morning"
- Speak to co-workers politely
- Ask co-workers how their day is going
- Thank co-workers at the end of the day

Characteristics of a customer service superstar:

- Have a positive attitude
- Put the customer "center stage"
- View their job as a human relations profession
- Can allow customers to believe they're right (even when they are wrong)

\*\*Information taken directly from National RTAP's Customer Driven Service Training Module

# Customer Service

## Quiz Three: Steps in Quality Customer Service

Please answer the following questions:

1. Which of the following is a basic step in quality customer service? (choose one)
  - a) Welcome customers
  - b) Provide for customer needs
  - c) Thank customers
  - d) All of the above
2. Maintaining a positive attitude improves both your day and a customer's experience on your bus.  
True or False (circle one)
3. The ability to provide quality customer service is achieved by taking many small actions to give the customer a positive experience on the transit vehicle.  
True or False (circle one)

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# Customer Service

## Quiz Four: Who is Responsible for Morale?

Please answer the following questions:

1. Only your supervisor has the ability to raise or lower morale in the workplace.  
True or False (circle one)
2. Low morale in a workplace negatively impacts customer service.  
True or False (circle one)
3. You should never allow customers to think they are right in situations when they are incorrect.  
True or False (circle one)

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# Customer Service

## Issue Five: Responding to Customer Complaints

The following are three best practices to keep in mind when you receive a customer complaint or are interacting with a dissatisfied rider:

### **Involve the customer in the solution**

Get the customer's input on how he/she would like the problem to be solved, and do it if the request is reasonable. What customers want most is a respectful, courteous response to their concerns, and you will find that, in most cases, their demands are more reasonable than you may imagine.

### **Address problems right away**

While it is not pleasant to deal with customer complaints or dissatisfied riders, if you do not address the problem it will not improve on its own. Ensure that you are truly listening to the customer and act (not react) using your best judgement.

### **Don't take it personally**

When a customer has a complaint, he/she is directing his/her frustrations at you. However, it is important to keep in mind that the customer is actually angry about the situation (the bus being late, for example), not angry at you. If you take things personally in this situation, your emotions will make it harder to address the real concern.

\*\*Information taken directly from National RTAP's Customer Driven Service Training Module

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# Customer Service

## Issue Six: Dealing with Difficult Passengers

When dealing with an irritable, hostile or disruptive passenger, your goal should be to persuade the person to calm down. The following are some techniques for achieving this result.

You should stay calm and neutral, and avoid making it personal by not using "I" when giving directives. Respect your customers no matter what the circumstances, and understand what pushes people's buttons. Understanding where people are coming from and what might be contributing to their bad behavior often dictates how you respond.

Actions you can take:

- Listen- show that you are really listening and absorbing what the customer is telling you.
- Find something to agree on- redirect the conversation away from the negative toward common good.
- Offer an explanation- passengers are more willing to accept a negative situation if you give them the reason.
- Offer a solution- show that you are willing to work to solve the problem.
- Divert attention- try to focus the passenger's attention away from what they are doing and on to something else.
- Try a compliment- compliments can disarm an irritable passenger.
- Ask a question- ask if you can help them in some way.
- Let it go- pick your battles and realize when a situation could escalate into a larger issue.
- Present a choice- present the customer with a positive and negative choice and let him/her decide.
- Place the issue on higher ground- let them know that you are concerned about their safety and the safety of other riders.

\*\*Information taken directly from National RTAP's Problem Passengers Challenging Situations Training Guide

# Customer Service

## Quiz Five: Responding to Customer Complaints

Please answer the following questions:

1. Which of the following should you NOT do when handling a customer complaint or dissatisfied rider?  
(choose one)  
  
a) Listen to the customer  
b) Leave the problem to take care of itself  
c) Address the problem right away
2. If a customer's request to solve the problem is reasonable, you should do your best to act on that request.  
  
True or False (circle one)
3. You should never involve a customer when you are trying to find a solution to his/her problem.  
  
True or False (circle one)

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# Customer Service

## Quiz Six: Dealing with Difficult Passengers

Please answer the following questions:

1. When dealing with a difficult passenger, you should make it personal by using "I" when giving directives.  
  
True or False (circle one)
2. What are recommended actions you can take when dealing with difficult passengers? (choose one)  
  
a) Offer an explanation  
b) Listen  
c) Divert attention  
d) All of the above
3. If a customer is not showing respect to you, you should not show respect to him/her.  
  
True or False (circle one)

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