Delivering Customer Satisfaction

By Norb Slowikowski

How well are you serving your customers, both internal and external customers? Internal customers are those inside the company with which you work and interact. External customers are the general contractor’s superintendent, the architect, the owner and the other trades on the job.

A key concept of customer satisfaction is this: The level of service an employee brings to a customer is a reflection of how well that employee feels served, or how well his needs are being met by the organization. You can only serve the external customer satisfactorily to the extent that internal customers serve each other.

What Is a Customer?
C—Someone who has concerns and needs to be communicated with.
U—Someone who requires understanding.
S—Someone who expects top-notch service.
T—Someone who wants tangible results.
O—Someone who wants an organizational commitment that his needs will be satisfied.
M—Someone who meets his deadlines.
E—Someone who expects high energy and enthusiasm from those with whom he does business.
R—Someone who expects reliability and responsiveness.

To provide a high level of customer satisfaction, you must meet the following requirements:

Create W.O.W. “Work on Winning.” Establish win/win relationships. Be action-oriented by giving the customer what he wants first, and you’ll probably get what you want.

Act Like You’re the Company. No matter who you are or what you do, the behavior you transmit to the customer creates a perception that leads to an evaluation of the total company. If the foreman is argumentative and surly with the GC’s superintendent, then the superintendent will tell the people in his company that your company is nothing but trouble.

Be Competent and Care. This requires people who know how to solve problems, meet the schedule and produce quality results. They’re proactive rather than reactive. They also project a “whole job” focus and genuinely care about the GC’s problems and help solve them.

Honesty Is the Only Policy. When there’s a problem that prevents you from being effective and efficient, present your case to the GC without emotion and offer a solution to solve the problem. Be candid without attacking the person, but have the facts and display a willingness to help.

Listen—It Creates Trust and Respect. Hear people out. Let them finish what they’re saying. Don’t interrupt them while they’re talking—gain an understanding of the issue, problem or need, and let them know you’re there to make things better.

Provide Exceptional Service. Do more than what’s expected. Provide value, which is in the eyes of the beholder. Find out what’s really important to your customer and then deliver it.

Be a Fantastic Fixer. There’s a solution for every problem. Let the customer know that you will do whatever it takes to solve the problem. Even if you don’t have the answer, you will go to other people in your company who have the knowledge and expertise to solve the customer’s problems. Use team concepts.

Master the Art of Calm. Control your emotions. Yelling only creates problems instead of solving them. Expressing dissatisfaction in a straightforward, assertive way opens the door to mutual respect and problem resolution.

Next month, I’ll elaborate on how to establish customer satisfaction on the site.

About the Author
Norb Slowikowski is president of Slowikowski & Associates, Inc., Darien, Ill.