



# How may I be of service?

**Cultivating excellence through  
Communication**

*Presented by:  
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# Traditional Views of Customer Service



# Defining Customer Service

- Traditional definition:
  - “All interactions between a customer and a product provider at the time of sale and thereafter. Customer Service adds value to a product and builds enduring relationships” <http://www.businessdictionary.com/>



- Service is
  - an expectation and business requirement to compete and retain customers.
  - subjective word and its meanings can differ based on its definition or precedence.

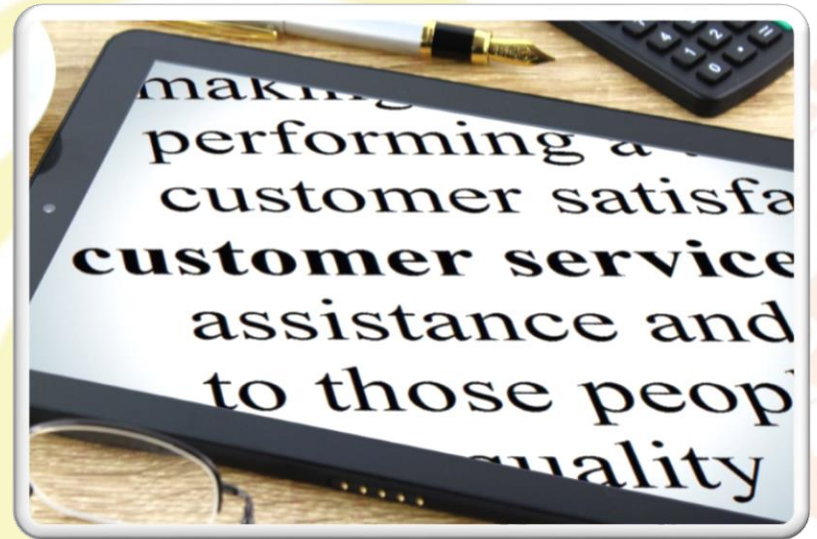
# Defining Customer Service

- Business or Higher Education – 2 types of customers
  - External customers
    - those who partake or participate in the organization's product or service
  - Internal customers
    - those who help to produce the product or service



# Business Experts and Customer Service

- KNOW your customers
- FOCUS your business on customers
- LISTEN to your customers
- Use proper ETIQUETTE
- RESOLVE issues promptly
- Build long-term RELATIONSHIPS
- DELIVER what you promise



***What it does not say  
is “The customer is  
always right.”***

# How is Customer Service relevant to higher education

- According to a leading authority on academic customer service and author of *Embrace the Oxymoron: Customer Service in Higher Education* Neal Raisman, PhD
  - Higher education needs Customer Service Principles
    - Struggling economy and widespread collegiate competition
    - Decreased revenues, lowered budgets, dropping retention numbers and universal cutbacks
    - Students believe themselves customers and expect to be treated as such
    - But customers are *not* always right
      - for the sake of their personal growth and development or their education
    - *That doesn't get us off the hook for providing exceptional customer service. It does mean doing so is complicated by our responsibility to always make decisions that are in their best interests and by the long-term relationships we have, rather than one-time purchase interactions.*

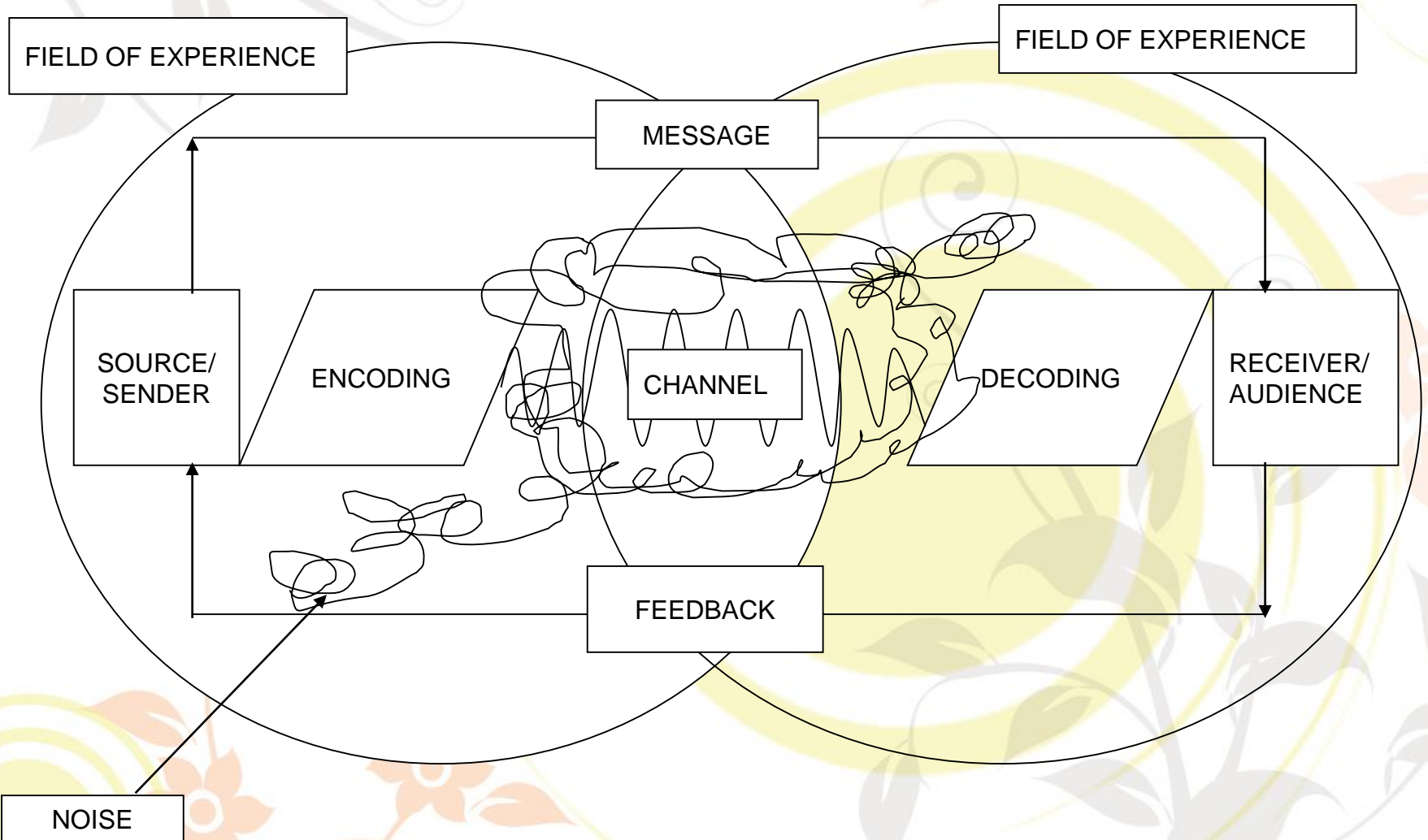


# Communication and Customer Service

- "The foundational principles and ideas that underlie excellent service delivery are as applicable to those working in higher education as they are to someone working at a grocery store or a five-star hotel. The implementation of these foundational principles accomplishes two important goals: to improve internal teamwork and to more effectively fulfill the needs of those who come to us for service" *Dr. Mario Martinez 'Creating A Service Culture in Higher Education Administration'*

- 
- **What matters most is responsiveness/ efficiency, courtesy, clarity, and conflict management, all vital parts of communication.**

# Basics of Communication

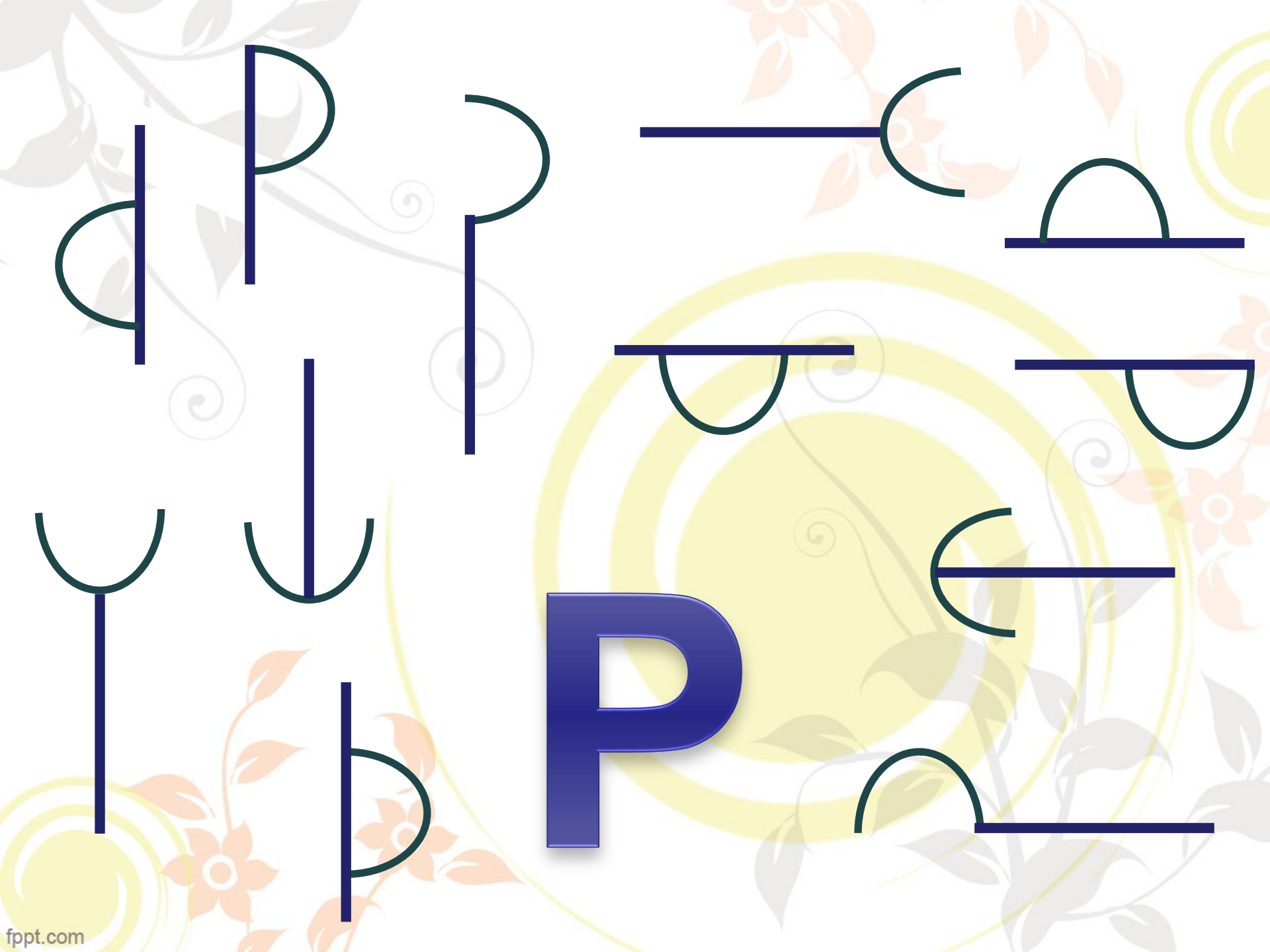




# Clarity/Clear Communication

We have the power to make our customers feel good or bad just by the way we communicate - Val & Jeff Gee *Super Service: Seven Keys to Delivering Great Customer Service*

- Activity
  - Draw a line
  - Attach a half circle to it



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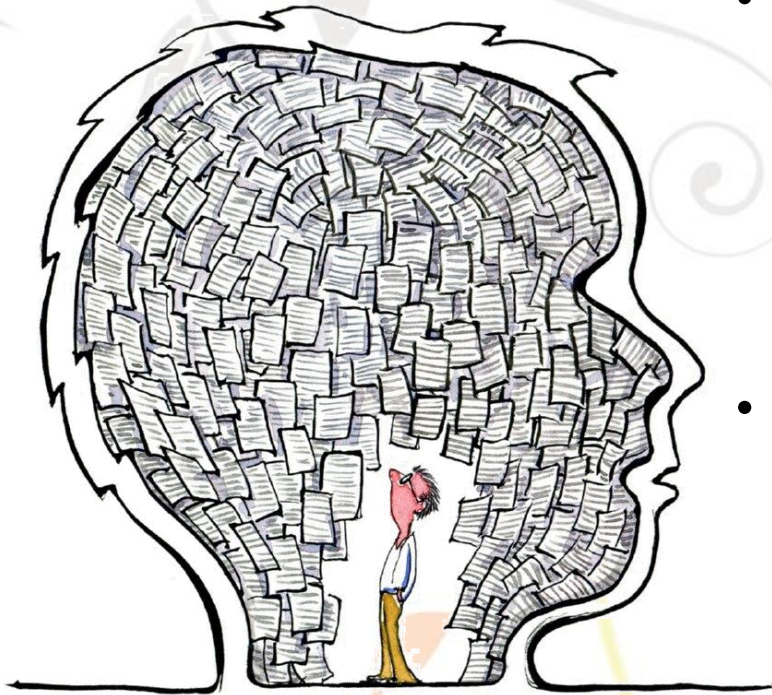
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# Clarity/Clear Communication

- Clearer communication is instructive and preventative.
  - For example, even if a problem is the student's fault and he or she didn't follow directions, faculty/staff should see it as a teaching opportunity.
  - "The correct response to the student's [or any other internal/external customer] issue is: 'Let me take care of that for you ... OK, now it's taken care of. Now, if you do this next time, it won't be a problem; let me walk you through it.' Resolve the problem, then educate the student." According to Rick Weems, past assistant vice president for enrollment at Southern Oregon University
  - Employees are more valuable to an institution when they bring humanity to customer service rather than reading policies and procedures.



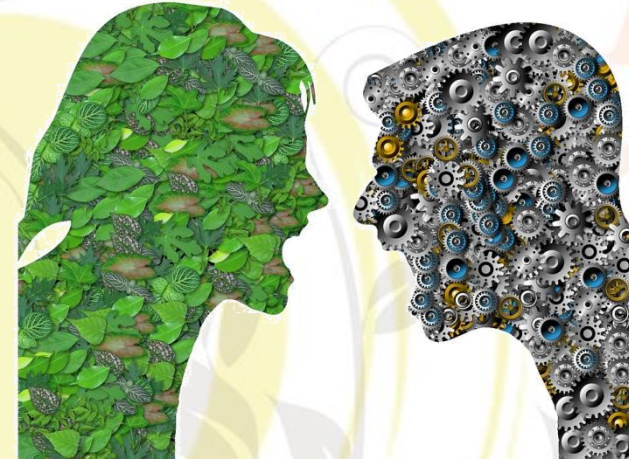
# Clarity Tips



- Don't assume - ask for clarification: most people appreciate the effort that you're putting in to help them thoroughly understand a lot more than they'll appreciate an answer to the wrong question
- Use the power of images: especially going through a process, images and screenshots can get your point across more easily than words
- If images are not available, use simple analogies: paint a picture with your words to explain hard to grasp concepts

# Conflict Management

- Conflict
  - A state of disagreement or opposition between two or more persons regarding ideas, interests, needs, values, desires, or wishes.
- Root of Conflict
  - Our personal fears and insecurities
  - Misunderstandings in communication
  - Lack of information or communication
  - Need for control and predictability in our lives
- What is Conflict Management?
  - It's not just about disagreements; it's about working through problems, managing differences of opinion, and that's vital for moving forward.



# 5 Basic Conflict Management Responses

Worst to Best Responses

- **Confronting:** using aggression, passive aggression, or violence
- **Avoiding:** withdrawing or giving in
- **Accommodating:** smoothing or submitting
- **Compromising:** “splitting the difference”
- **Collaborating:** working to solve the problem



# Conflict Management

- If you have something important to say, **WRITE IT DOWN**. Writing helps organize your thinking.
- Find **DISTRACTION FREE** environments and choose a time when each person can focus on the issue without distractions. Don't try to do two things at the same time – such as have a conversation and read a telephone message.
- Use **OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS** to invite dialog and elicit information. Use closed questions to clarify specific information.
- Make sure your **NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION** expresses the message you want to send. Your body language needs to be consistent with your words.
- Use the **PAUSE** button before you speak. Count to three after a person has stopped speaking before you leap into the conversation.
- Good listening means **NOT ASSUMING** meaning or intent. Be wary about jumping to conclusions about the speaker's message or intent.

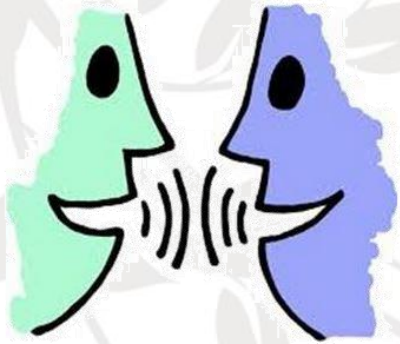




# Conflict Management



- Ask for **CLARIFICATION** when you don't understand something. Requesting clarification does not mean that you are slow. It means that you sincerely want to understand what is being said.
- **RESTATE** in your own words what you think the person is saying and feeling about the issue. Trust the other person to correct you if you are not 100% accurate.
- While you are listening to another person, **MAKE NOTES**. This is a useful memory tool and gives the impression that you are taking the other person seriously.
- **TAILOR** your message to your listener. Relate your message to the listener's frame of reference and priorities as you understand them.
- Never try to tell a person that he or she doesn't feel the way they do – or try to talk them out of their feelings. Instead, offer **VALIDATION** for the person's feelings and perspectives.



# Responsiveness

- Refers to the degree that what YOU say, clearly and directly, to what the other person just said.
  - If you are being responsive, the other person knows you are paying attention, and care enough about what he or she is talking about to "stay on that topic."
- “Responsiveness is defined as the degree of feeling that customer service provides prompt service, and is ready and never too busy to respond to requests” Mehdi Khosrow-Pour.  
Issues & Trends of Information Technology Contemporary Organizations Vol.1



# Responsiveness



- An approach you can intentionally cultivate
  - Pay attention to what the other person says
  - Responding directly to it BEFORE shifting the focus of the conversation to yourself
  - Give up some control and let the other person play.
- You'll find that the results can be rather astounding. There is so little responsiveness going on in most communication that when you are responsive, you separate yourself as being somewhat special and interpersonally valuable.

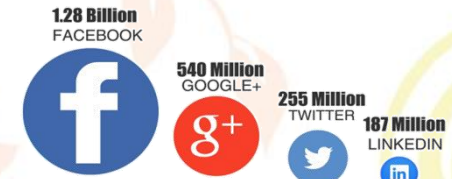


# New Wave Responsiveness

- Different communication preferences and expect more than one channel or method to be available
  - For example, when people can't help themselves on a website, and if a phone call doesn't solve their problem or they'd simply rather use another channel, they'll turn to places like social media to find a solution.
- Social media
  - Can set the tone for customer services expectations for every channel at an institution
- Author Jay Baer defined two types of people who complain about businesses:
  - people who want help
    - typically use the prescribed channels
  - people who want attention
    - 41% of people who complain on social media anticipate a response
    - If they do receive a response, they're almost twice as likely to recommend the company afterward



# Social Media



- Dan Zaiontz, in his book *#Follow The Leader*, analyzed the success of college presidents who use social media and identified five styles of presidential presence
  - Customer Servant
    - paragon of customer service, taking to using social media to respond to all queries from various students, faculty, and staff
  - Institutional promoter
    - focuses on merely sharing institutional interests, avoiding personal details
  - Socially inconsistent president
    - not particularly active in maintaining a social media presence
  - Oversharing non-strategist
    - over-zealous sharing of personal content and range of seemingly random messages, seems unclear and unfocused
  - Socially active strategist
    - demonstrates the strategic bent which many of the other styles lack, melding a focus on institutional interests, including creating meaningful discussions with key stakeholders with curated personal details; to align social media activities with institutional strategies as much as possible and in measured tone and regularity



# Courtesy

- Business-like does not equal abrupt or rude
  - Business-like is efficient
  - Efficiency involves genuine and sincere courtesy.
- True courtesy
  - being aware not only of the perspective of others, but also their feelings
  - not merely politeness with mechanical insertions of “please” and “thank you”, (although applying socially accepted manners is a form of courtesy)
- Courtesy is politeness that grows out of respect and concern for others

# Courtesy



- Courtesy involves
  - empathy
  - awareness of the needs of others
  - willingness to compromise
  - evaluating differing opinions
  - adapt to the needs of various audiences, including those from the other cultures or within the context of professional group
  - replying to all messages, whether emails, letters or telephone messages in a timely manner and setting up systems for ensuring that messages do not 'slip through the net'



# Courtesy

- Professional courtesy also means keeping our word and doing what we say we are going to do
- Do not blame others for communication breakdown
- Recognize any potential communication barriers and pre-empt them
- Familiarize ourselves with the interpersonal norms of other cultural groups
- Learning to be courteous and polite all the times can save wasted energy and needless worry

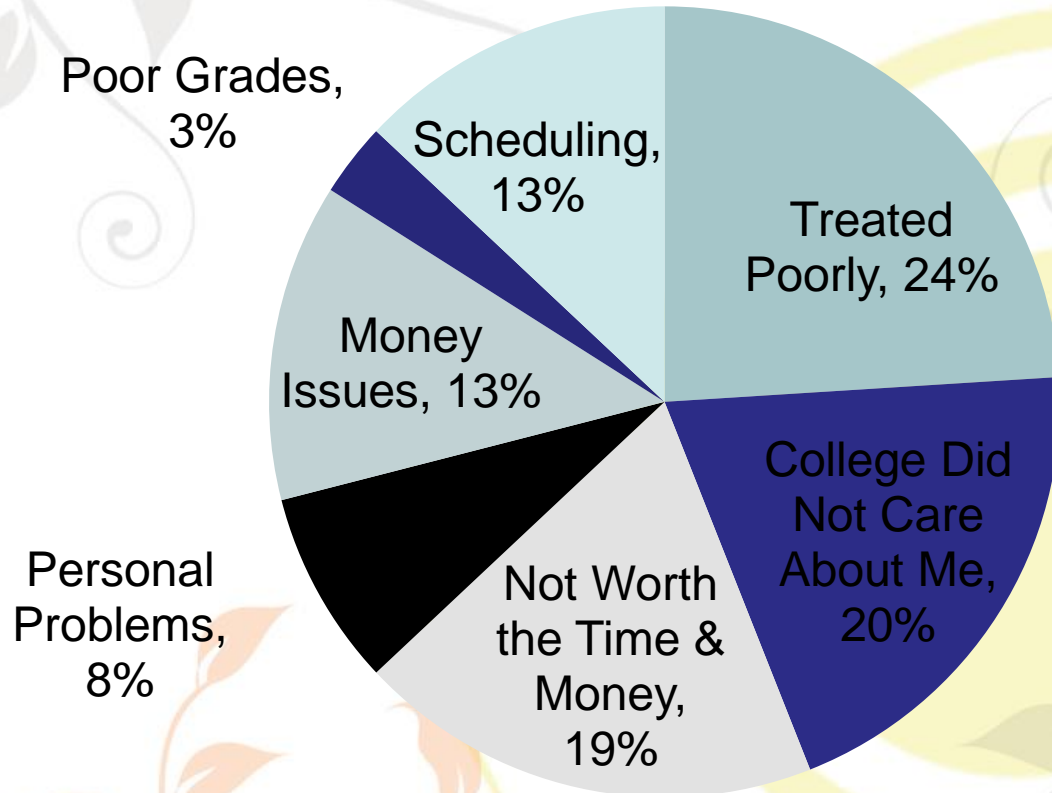




# Higher Education and Customer Service

- According to Neal Raisman, PhD: “Every school needs to recognize that although it's expensive to attract and enroll students, it's even more expensive when we lose them.”
- With Customer Service Principles
  - Can increase enrollments by as much as 12%
  - Can increase retention as much as 20% by providing better customer service.
- Found that 83 % of "personal reasons" students cite for leaving a school actually reflect dissatisfaction with the institution's customer service

# Higher Education and Customer Service



According to research by Neal Raisman, PhD  
President, NRaisman and Associates

# Student Defined Customer Service

- Perception of the return on financial investment
  - When students believe their tuition dollars are being used to create educational experiences that will lead to success in their field of study, they are satisfied with their financial investment.
- Perception of the return on emotional investment
  - When they believe their engagement and emotional tie to the school is returned via faculty and staff who care about them and treat them with thoughtfulness, they are satisfied with their emotional investment.
- Perception of the return on associative investment
  - When students believe they gain status by being accepted into and becoming part of an institution, they are satisfied with their associative investment.

# The right attitude

- An attitude of helpfulness: committed to helping all the way through to the right answer, a connection with the right person, or even just listening. Dr. Guy F. Riekeman, president of Life University in Marietta, GA
- A personal commitment to building relationships: a goal to be intentional collaborators and active listeners willing to reach out to others to learn more about what they do and need. Dr. Guy F. Riekeman
- Managing to the best solution: committed to approaching every issue with the idea of finding a way to get to "yes" while being compassionate and realistic in searching for attainable solutions. Dr. Guy F. Riekeman
- User friendly always: understanding it is our responsibility to learn more so we can help more. Dr. Guy F. Riekeman
- “Colleges that are student-centered and treat students as welcomed and respected customers, while making sure they get a great education, will have enrollment and retention success.” - Neal Raisman, Ph.D



How the customer explained it



How it was understood



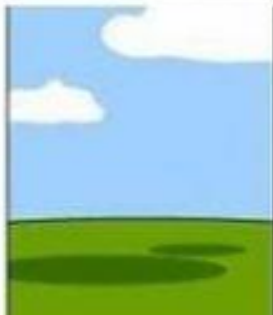
How it was designed



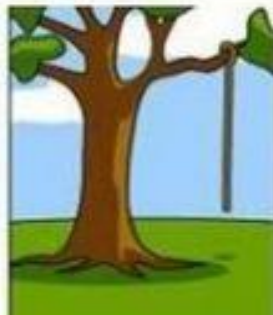
How it was tested



How it was described to others



How it was documented



How it was implemented



How the customer felt about the process



How it was supported



What the customer really wanted

# COMMUNICATION

sometimes people really should talk more

**And listen even harder**

# Questions?



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