

Customer Service and Communication

Bringing service to the next level

Park Authority Philosophy & Goals

Before focusing on customer service, it is first important to understand and reinforce the Park Authority's mission, vision, and values...

The Park Authority Mission

To set aside public spaces for and assist citizens in the protection and enhancement of environmental values, diversity of natural habitats and cultural heritage to guarantee these resources will be available to both present and future generations.

To create and sustain quality facilities and services which offer citizens opportunities for recreation, improvement of their physical and mental well being, and enhancement of their quality of life.

Park Authority

Vision and Values

VISION

We strive to inspire and sustain a passion for parks and leisure experiences that enhances our community's quality of life.

VALUES

- Enhancing stewardship
- Fostering diversity
- Developing partnerships
- Providing quality and value
- Communication effectively
- Valuing our workforce
- Demonstrating fiscal responsibility

Why customer service matters; consider the implications

- Experience is the most important factor in customer* satisfaction.
- A customer's perception of the experience is primarily based on staff** performance, safety and communication. Basically, they expect excellent customer service in a safe environment. Don't you?
- We each contribute to the success of a customer's experience; it is our responsibility to make each interaction memorable, helpful, and remarkable.
- Each of us represents the Park Authority to our customers. What does this mean to you? So much depends on how you interact with every customer every time.

* "Customers" includes customers and visitors.

** "Staff" includes paid employees and volunteers.

Our customers tell us how we impact their lives

- Most residents feel the Park Authority is a very or extremely important contributor to their quality of life. In fact, people who use our parks have a more positive outlook on their quality of life than those who don't.
- Our ability to provide a quality experience during a person's visit has more impact on their perception of quality of life in the county than mere park use.
- Those who receive the best experience we can offer also have the most optimistic outlook on quality of life in the county. Those who say our service is only average are less upbeat about their quality of life.
- The message is clear; The Park Authority in general, and our service, in particular, can make a positive difference in people's lives. Conversely, we can negatively impact someone's view about their quality of life in the county through poor service. We must strive to provide the highest level of service every day.

Why STARS?

- We all agree that the Park Authority goal is to provide excellent customer service.
- How we agree on what “excellent customer service” means is why we have STARS. It gives us a shared understanding, it becomes our standard.



What is STARS?

- **S = Standards** – To deliver consistently high quality customer service, we must understand the standards for which we strive.
- **T = Tasks** – This is the nuts and bolts of our daily jobs. We all have tasks to accomplish that are vital to customer service delivery. If we fail to follow up on our tasks, no matter how large or small, there will be a gap in our service and we'll fail to meet our standards.
- **A = Accountability** – Every one of us, as Park Authority team members, is accountable for the delivery and implementation of high quality customer service.
- **R = Reliability** – We all share in ensuring that we deliver the very best customer service on a reliable basis.
- **S = Seamless** – We promise to deliver seamless customer service to our customers and visitors. Whenever a customer enters a facility, calls us on the phone or uses our website, we should put our best foot forward to ensure their satisfaction.

Self Assessment

Before moving on, take the self assessment.

It will not be collected so this is an opportunity to privately determine the level of service you feel you currently provide.



Self Assessment

Rate the following statements using a scale from 1, lowest to 5, highest.
Record your responses on a piece of paper.

1. I greet every customer who enters my service area.
2. I use my facility's name during every greeting.
3. I always greet every customer throughout their visit, even in the hallways.
4. I always thank the customer for visiting as they leave.
5. I am always polite even when I have "bad" days.
6. I have the information I need to respond to most customer questions.
7. I see my job with customers as critical to the overall operation of my organization.
8. My understanding of our services and programs is adequate to serve most customers.
9. I can most always solve customer problems.
10. Whenever I need assistance to help a customer, I can get it.

Self Assessment, continued

11. I handle complaints effectively, so my customers are satisfied.
12. I know how to politely decline and say “no” to a customer's request.
13. I do not act defensively when someone has a complaint.
14. I always smile and make eye contact.
15. Providing excellent customer service is a standard practice in our organization.
16. I give equal service to all customers.
17. I am often praised by my supervisors for my interpersonal skills.
18. I have authority to make exceptions.
19. I have excellent follow-up procedures.
20. I know the proper way to refer a customer to my supervisor.

Self Assessment, continued

21. Even when the customer is wrong, I keep my cool and find a way to satisfy the customer.
22. Telephone customers are treated as well as walk-in customers.
23. I always return every phone call I promise to make to every customer.
24. I am always enthusiastic and polite and ready to serve the next customer.
25. I use the customer's name during every transaction.
26. I listen effectively without interrupting.
27. I always take the time to talk about our other programs and services when there's time.
28. I always thank the customers for registering or using our services.
29. It is easy for me to remain calm and relaxed even when other customers are waiting.
30. I can be attentive and accurate at the same time.
31. My appearance reflects professionalism.

How did you do?

Use the assessment to pat yourself on the back where you gave yourself 4's and 5's. Use the statements you scored yourself lower on to help focus on areas of improvement in service delivery.

Human Need vs. Business Need

Huh? What does that mean?

Think of an example of exceptional customer service you have received, and why it was remarkable.

Our customers are not machines and they don't want us to be, either. Meeting the "human" need means we must connect with them emotionally during every interaction to best represent the Park Authority brand.

Branding Questions

- What does “brand” mean to you?
- What brands immediately come to mind?
- What is our brand?
 - Think of the Park Authority as a person. If you were asked to describe your friend, the Park Authority, how would you?
- Do you know the four parts of our branded telephone greeting?

Branding Answers

- Definition of Brand - A unique identifier that tells the world what you do and what you offer as an agency.
- Whichever brands you thought of are successful because it is very clear what they stand for and what they offer.
- The Park Authority brand is involved in the community, family-oriented, upbeat, healthy, active, flexible, fun, cares about the environment, has a wide variety of interests. You represent the brand because, to the customer, you ARE the Park Authority. Each of us must reinforce the Park Authority brand with every customer interaction.
- The 4 parts of the Park Authority branded telephone greeting
 - Greeting – “Thank you for calling”
 - Location – say the site name without abbreviating it
 - Your name – “This is *insert your first name* speaking”
 - Offer of assistance – “How can I help you?”

The STARS

Interaction Skills

There are four interaction skills which affect the customer service experience.

1. Voice tone
2. Mirroring
3. Rapport building
4. Complaint handling

Game Time

“I’m going to work to increase customer satisfaction.”

- Read the statement above out loud.
- Now, read it out loud as if angry.
- Finally, read it with excitement.
- Feeling like a crazy person about now?

Time to focus on the first skill – which is ..?

Voice Tone

Questions :

1. As listeners, do we pay more attention to the words used or to voice tone?
2. Is it okay to show your personality when interacting?
3. When is voice tone more important – on the phone or in person?
4. What is the one thing we can all do to improve our voice tone?

Voice Tone

Answers:

1. As listeners, we “hear” voice tone more than the words used. Always try to convey enthusiasm and a willingness to help customers.
2. Yes, show your personality to better respond to the human need for connection!
3. Voice tone is equally important on the phone and in person. Either interaction can make or break the way a customer feels about the Park Authority.
4. The one thing we can all do to improve our voice tone is smile.





- Mirroring is the verbal skill of editing and summarizing a customer's words and style, ensuring the communication between you is clear.
- Mirroring occurs when you adjust your voice tone to the customer's tone and occasionally repeat the customer's words, asking if the understanding is correct.
- Think of our varied customers – Adults, seniors, parents, children, those who speak English as a second language, people in a rush, people wanting to socialize, just to name a few.
- Consider how you change your approach for each one.

Mirroring vs. Mimicking

- Mirroring is a verbal skill of editing and summarizing a customer's words and style.
- Mimicking is copying, no matter what and is considered rude or mean-spirited.



Rapport Building

- Questions -

- What is rapport building?
- Why is it an important interaction skill?
- When should you interact with a customer?
- Can you think of examples of negative rapport building?



Rapport Building Answers

- Rapport: “A relationship of mutual trust and respect” – building a relationship with a customer.
- When we build rapport with customers, they become at ease and their experience is improved.
- Interact with customers wherever you see them throughout their visit.
- Negative rapport building happens when we talk about inappropriate topics or complain about the Park Authority with customers. Remember, to customers, you are the Park Authority.

Tips to Help Build Rapport with Customers

- Greet them as they enter your work area. Saying hello or making eye contact and smiling go a long way.
- Ask how their visit is going.
- Listen; it is the only way you will meet their needs.
- If they ask for something we can't provide, tell them what you can do rather than what you can't.
- Solve their problems efficiently and effectively.
- Thank them as they leave.

Other Ways We Communicate

When using the interaction skills, be aware of other ways we communicate at the same time:

- Body language
- Attitude
- Appearance

Communicating Through Body Language

Actions can convey more than words. Without the support of the non-verbal communication it is easier to misunderstand meaning. Each customer deserves to be treated as an honored guest. Does your body language convey that?

- **Good body language**
 - Eye contact
 - Smile
 - Mirror a customer's body language
 - What else?
- **Poor body language:**
 - Pointing at someone
 - Rolling your eyes as a customer speaks
 - Crossed arms
 - What else?

Body Language – Facial Expressions



What is being expressed in each photo?

Attitude

- Be aware that what you say is consistent with how you feel about serving others.
- Each of us can successfully serve customers with the right attitude, motivation, and skills. STARS teaches us the skills. It is up to us to choose our attitude toward customers.

The answer is yes.

Now, what is the question?

Appearance

- How we present ourselves to our customers is part of our job because we are all judged based on it.
- Think of your appearance as representing the Park Authority brand.
- What is the uniform policy at your workplace? If you are not sure, check with your supervisor.

Facility Knowledge

- Be familiar with the facility and the programs
- If you don't know the information, know where to find it.
- Take ownership with a customer's question.

Equipped with the first three interaction skills, along with additional information to improve communication and with an understanding of your facility, you have the tools for the final interaction skill...

Complaint Handling

Steps for effective complaint handling:

1. Listen!
2. Apologize
3. Ask questions and answer questions
4. Talk about solutions
5. Thank the customer
6. Empower yourself to solve problems
7. Be consistent

Complaints are good because they make us better.

More on Complaint Handling

Your options to solve a complaint:

1. Solve the problem
2. If you can't solve the problem, take it to someone who can
3. Lack of follow through is an un-kept promise.

What We've Learned:

- Why we're here – Park Authority Mission and Values
- STARS – The Park Authority standard for service
- Interaction skills
 - Voice Tone
 - Mirroring
 - Rapport Building
 - Complaint Handling
- Understanding additional ways we communicate:
 - Body Language
 - Attitude
 - Appearance
- Facility Knowledge

Test Your Knowledge

1. STARS stands for:
 - a. S – Support, T – Trustworthy, A – Assist, R – Responsible, S – Sensitive
 - b. S – Service, T – Thorough, A – Anticipate, R – Reflect, S – Safety
 - c. S – Standards, T – Tasks, A – Accountability, R – Reliability, S – Seamless
 - d. S – Systematic, T – Thoughtful, A – Apologize, R – Relationships, S – Sincere

2. Fill in the blanks: Meeting the _____ need means we must connect with each customer _____ during every interaction to best represent the Park Authority brand.

3. True or false: Agreeing with a customer when he or she complains about the Park Authority is an example of building negative rapport.

4. When using the interaction skills, we also communicate through:
 - a. Appearance
 - b. Body language
 - c. Attitude
 - d. All the above

5. Fill in the blanks: Complaints are good because they _____ us _____.

Test Your Knowledge Cont'd

6. What is the most important factor in customer satisfaction?
 - a. Smiling
 - b. Experience
 - c. Cleanliness
 - d. Safety

7. True or false: Developing a relationship of trust and respect with a customer is rapport building.

8. What are the STARS interaction skills?
 - a. Smiling, Summarizing, Rapport Building, Facility Knowledge
 - b. Voice Tone, Summarizing, Appearance, Complaint Handling
 - c. Body Language, Mirroring, Attitude, Facility Knowledge
 - d. Voice Tone, Mirroring, Rapport Building, Complaint Handling

9. True or false: Customers pay more attention to the words used than they do the tone of voice.

Test Your Knowledge Cont'd

10. What one thing can you do to improve your voice tone?
 - a. Smile
 - b. Speak slowly
 - c. Show your personality
 - d. Use the branded greeting

11. Fill in the blanks: Human needs are _____ while business needs are _____.

12. Mirroring occurs when you:
 - a. Change your approach with our varied customers
 - b. Repeat words
 - c. Check if your understanding is correct
 - d. Adjust your voice tone to match that of the customer
 - e. All of the above

Test Your Knowledge Cont'd

13. Greeting every customer and thanking them as they leave was learned in which interaction skill?
 - a. Voice tone
 - b. Mirroring
 - c. Rapport building
 - d. Complaint handling

14. Fill in the blank: When interacting with every customer, each of us represents the _____.

15. STARS customer service is for:
 - a. Managers only
 - b. Managers and front desk staff only
 - c. Everyone except instructors
 - d. Front line staff only
 - e. Everyone

If you aren't busy helping someone, help someone who is.



Now go out
and work to
increase customer satisfaction!