

Checklist -- Sustaining A Customer Service Initiative

The launch phase may last several months, or even a year, depending on the organization. The service initiative launch usually includes such activities as:

- Creating a service improvement team or committee;
- Developing service standards;
- Communicating the details of the service initiative to the organization
- Developing and implementing training programs for all employees
- Developing and implementing a service recognition program

Each of the above activities are important and must be carefully planned and executed. The launch, however, simply gets things going. Now comes the excruciating and disciplined work to keep things going. Most organizations simply aren't that committed and stop short of doing the things that truly sustain the service initiative.

The following checklist may assist you in assessing how well you are following through on creating a culture of service excellence - beyond the launch phase.

- Have all performance appraisals been revised to significantly include customer service factors?
- Have all job descriptions been revised to ensure that customer service is reflected as a significant job expectation for everyone?
- Does your organization have a rigorous succession planning process to ensure that only those who truly live the organization's values are promoted up the corporate ladder?
- Are merit increases and bonuses connected to customer service performance?
- Has new hire orientation been revised to include the key messages of the service initiative?
- Are on-the-job trainers carefully selected as service role models? Are they trained to be effective trainers? Have all training materials been updated with the latest service content?
- Have your employees attended formalized customer service refresher training in the last year?
- Has the interview/selection process been revised to ensure that the company is hiring service-oriented employees and modeling the company's service values?
- Are ongoing customer satisfaction measurement systems in place? Are the results communicated to everyone in the organization?
- Does the executive team visibly and publicly demonstrate their commitment to the service improvement process on a regular basis?
- Is there ongoing communication regarding customer service that is up-to-date, fresh, and creative?

Any question to which your answer is "no" or "not really" is an area that should be addressed if you are to keep a service improvement initiative alive.