

A WEEK IN *Learning*

Serving Each Other Through Internal Customer Service

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There's a remarkably close and consistent link between how internal customers are treated and how external customers perceive the quality of your organization's services. A commitment to serve internal customers invariably shows itself to external customers. It's almost impossible to provide good external service if your organization is not providing good internal service."

– Benjamin Schneider, University of Maryland

Providing an outstanding customer service experience is relevant across all businesses, especially in retail. With retail businesses competing for customer loyalty, it is essential that companies provide their external customers with a truly stellar experience. In doing so, those customers are more likely to repeat business there, especially if there is a commitment to internal customer service.

So, who is an internal customer? It is safe to say that, at some point, we probably never thought that the term 'customer' had more than just one representation. While the term 'customer' is most commonly associated with someone who purchases goods or services, an internal customer is anyone within the organization who we work with. Internal customers have a direct link to the external customers and the quality of product, or service, they receive. Whether the internal customer is the receptionist, the store manager, or the call center representative, every team member in the organization is important when it comes to delivering a great product or service.

Everyone within our organization either directly, or indirectly, affects the outside customer. With this in mind, let's look at a handful of best practices that may help you improve your internal customer service:

1. Create Service Standards

- Think through the processes that serve both your internal and external customers, and set standards for clear communication
- Identify ideal response times for emails, calls, or service requests. What method works best for each of your internal customers?
- Get to know them! What are their preferences and factors that motivate them?



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2. Training and Development

- Those responsible for leading others should train team members on the importance of external and internal customer care
- Offer them training and development so they may achieve their own personal and professional goals
- Keep them informed on project progress and deadlines

3. Manage Performance

- Setting standards and offering training is important, but they are likely just exercises unless we are holding each other accountable for delivering this level of service. Offer support through positive and encouraging coaching
- Find ways to recognize and celebrate individual team member's successes, as well as your team as a whole. Let everyone know you value their hard work and how their work directly impacts our mission.

4. Job Shadow at GCNA

- Understand the different roles of your internal customers by shadowing another department. Whether you work in retail and want to try another area of production, or if you work in mission services and want to meet with a store manager – we can challenge ourselves to gain a better insight on the work we all do
- For more information about the Job Shadow program, search **JOB SHADOW Program overview** in the policies and procedures tab on the Gazette

5. Continual Process Improvement

- View interruptions as opportunities to serve each other. Look at the time you spend helping your internal customers as opportunities to assist and serve them
- If you, or your employees, view customers as interruptions this may hinder your success. Help these team members by encouraging them to re-examine their mindset
- Lead by example. If we expect our internal customers to deliver amazing customer service, then we should show them what it looks like

To summarize what Forbes magazine once said, there is no company without serving our fellow employees. When we empower them to serve their customers, magic happens. Our organization's culture is something that is created by the leadership of the organization and can become ingrained into the core fabric of the way business is done on a day-to-day basis. Positive work cultures can influence productivity and a healthy work environment. However, a culture that is less than positive can have the opposite effect by stifling worker productivity, and ultimately have an impact on the bottom line. Let's work hard today to serve each other with great internal customer service best practices, to create a sustainable future for GCNA.

To contact Goodwill's Learning and Development team, please email learninganddevelopment@goodwillaz.org