



Internal Customer Service Issues

This activity was created to be used primarily with:

9. Customer Service Orientation

Secondary skills include:

3. Initiative and Self-Direction

10. Teamwork

11. Big-Picture Thinking

14. Efficiency and Productivity

1. **Teacher will define Internal Customer Service as:** the experience employees have when interacting with their own workplace. It is a support role, function, mindset and sometimes, a department that enables the uninterrupted flow of work or attempts to fix workflow interruptions if they should occur. The job role for an internal customer service department is primarily managerial yet, more broadly, can be required as a mindset by all employees at all levels within an organization. It supports the mission of the enterprise. While internal customer service skills may not get you hired, a lack of them can get you fired. It is the way you interact with coworkers whose work has been impeded. Formal examples exist as the IT Support Desk and Human Resources Department.

Note. Internal Customer Service is the lesser known feature of Customer Service Orientation, which is mainly understood as the interaction between a business and its customers or clients. **There are lots of crossover opportunities for reinforcement with Initiative and Self-Direction, Teamwork, Big Picture Thinking, and Efficiency and Productivity.**

2. Teacher will present various strategies students could use to improve their skills for ways to support the mission of the workplace, based on current program.

Use this example to get them started:

Example: You are an entrepreneur and beyond your normal busy week, three of your ten employees have approached you independently about different problems affecting production. One raises concern for a job responsibility issue, one is a technology problem, and the last is a hiring problem. You quickly tackle the technology problem and the other two problems are to be addressed over the next two weeks. In week two, the technology problem is back and the other two still haven't been handled. Nobody is happy and you are getting behind.

What could be done to improve internal customer service?

Solutions:



Issue #1: Job responsibility issue

Clarify job responsibilities to employees by putting it in writing. In small businesses, job roles can change quickly, but time spent clarifying who is responsible for what can save time, promote morale, more efficiently serve your customers, and is always seen as a way to serve the collective mission of the team.

Issue #2: Technology problem.

This might be a system collapse, the integration of a new system or tool (which takes time and training), or even a great suggestion from an employee about doing something different within current operations. For whatever reason, you prioritized this problem, which is fine. But your solution didn't work and because you did not document or did not have your employees document the problem, process, or failure of the new plan, you now have the same problems and you are unsure about why your solution didn't work. Documentation, while not a solution within itself, allows you to share your problems clearly with employees. If failures do occur, employees are at least certain you are understanding their issues and encourage collective effort toward a solution.

Issue #3: Hiring problem: You need more workers.

Informed hiring decisions require a great deal of time and effort. It's understandable that you put off this task. However, it indicates stress among your workers. Productivity might be great, but there is too much work to be successfully handled by the current crew, not to mention that you might be disappointing your customers or missing them entirely. To fulfill the mindset of good internal customer service, simply scheduling a plan for expansion and hiring should be drawn up immediately. A plan to solve employee stress, even though implementation must be delayed, can go a long way to calm your staff and create buy-in. Do this and you can turn frustration into hopefulness. Workers can put up with a lot of adversity in the short-term as long as they believe it is only temporary.

All three issues have something to do with communicating, transparency, documenting decisions, and working toward a team approach. Serve your employees and they will be encouraged to take on more responsibility and promote the mission of the team. It starts with communication and listening to concerns. Make a schedule to address problems, and stick to it. It shows workers that you are taking their productivity and service issues seriously.

Assignment: Have students submit their original answers to the above scenario, or create a new parallel scenario based more closely on the type of internal customer service scenario they might encounter in their current career paths. You might have them imagine what their workplace looks like and research it through O*Net Online. Even if they do not plan on going into management, it creates empathy and understanding to put themselves in the shoes of managers or owners whose decisions might greatly affect their working lives. Have students consider how employees in the example scenario might positively and proactively influence internal customer service.

Additional resources:



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10 Internal Customer Service Best Practices: <https://blog.hubspot.com/service/internal-customer-service>

Developing Outstanding Internal Customer Service:
<https://www.mediacurrent.com/blog/developing-outstanding-internal-customer-service/>